

**The Academy of Religion
and Psychical Research**

**2001 Annual Conference
Proceedings**

**COSMIC
CONSCIOUSNESS,
THE NEAR-DEATH
EXPERIENCE,
AND THE AFTERLIFE**



The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research
P.O. Box 614
Bloomfield, Connecticut 06002-0614

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COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS, NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES, AND THE AFTERLIFE

PROCEEDINGS

**The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research
26th Annual Conference**

**Hastings Hotel and Conference Center
Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A.
June 8 - June 10, 2001**

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THE ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2001 PROCEEDINGS

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The *Proceedings* of the 2001 Annual Conference of The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, P.O. Box 614, Bloomfield, CT 06002-0614, U.S.A., an academic affiliate of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship International, P.O. Box 7868, Philadelphia, PA 19101, U.S.A.. The editor is Boyce Batey, P.O. Box 614, Bloomfield, CT 06002-0614, U.S.A. The owner is Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship International, an organization incorporated under the Pennsylvania General Not-For-Profit Corporation Law to conduct business in the State of Pennsylvania (with no stockholders), represented by The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research with a mailing office at Bloomfield, Connecticut, U.S.A.

| STATISTICAL DATA | AVERAGE FOR PRECEDING YEAR | SINGLE ISSUE NEAREST FILING |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Total Copies Printed..... | 260 | 250 |
| Paid Circulation: | | |
| Sales From Office..... | 0 | 0 |
| Mail Subscriptions..... | 196 | 183 |
| Total Paid Subscriptions..... | 196 | 183 |
| Free Distribution..... | 11 | 18 |
| Total Distribution..... | 207 | 201 |
| Office Use, Leftover..... | 53 | 49 |
| Total..... | 260 | 250 |

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

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INTRODUCTION

Boyce Batey

The conference of which these are the *Proceedings* dealt with eternal subjects about which thinking persons have raised unanswered - and perhaps unanswerable - questions. Reviewing the articles herein, you'll find answers and partial answers to some of the questions below and may have other questions of your own. Hold in mind that in dealing with these subjects, one walks a narrow path between having an open mind and a hole in the head. Great discernment is needed.

- 1) What is cosmic consciousness and what are its qualities?
- 2) Are enlightenment and cosmic consciousness the same or different?
- 3) How can cosmic consciousness be attained?
- 4) Are ineffable, inner experiences of cosmic consciousness that transform the lives of experiencers veridical evidence of the objectivity of God, survival of consciousness after bodily death, and the interconnectedness of all beings and things in the cosmos?
- 5) If there is a physical substrate to cosmic consciousness, what is it?
- 6) Was the consciousness manifested by Jesus cosmic in nature?
- 7) Do near-death, out-of-body, and non-locality of consciousness experiences evidence the duality and separability of the mind and brain?
- 8) What convincing evidence exists that some aspect of man survives bodily death?
- 9) Is veridical mediumship evidence of contact with some level of the afterlife, some form of paranormal cognition, or other forms of information transfer of which we're not yet aware?
- 10) Is reincarnation the only valid explanation for claimed memories of a previous life?
- 11) Is the philosophy of reincarnation compatible with Christianity?
- 12) What are postmortem judgmental life reviews and how do they compare and contrast with near-death panoramic life reviews?
- 13) Can quantum physics and/or parapsychics develop a workable theory of consciousness that explains near-death experiences, paranormal phenomena, survival of consciousness after bodily death and other related phenomena?

THEORIES ABOUT COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

by Rabia Lynn Clark, Ph.D.

Abstract: As this conference celebrates the 100th anniversary of the publication of Richard Maurice Bucke's book, *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901), I will write about his vantage point, and contrast it to Robert M. May's 1991 book, *Cosmic Consciousness Revisited*, to Near-Death Experiences, Past-Life Therapy cases, and kundalini experiences.

A Review of Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* Book

Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1902) was an interesting man. His father was a clergyman, who graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge, in England, and moved his family to a remote farm in Ontario, Canada. He brought thousands of books with him to that isolated place, and knew seven languages. Young Richard had almost no formal schooling, was taught Latin by his father, and turned loose among the books at home. The daily life was the ceaseless rounds of hard work on a farm. At seventeen, after his father, mother and stepmother had died, he traveled and did odd jobs, such as being a gardener, a railroad hand, a deck-hand on a steamboat, and as a driver in a wagon-train. This last was a trip fraught with danger from the Indians, and hardships of going over the Rockies and the desert.

He then became a gold miner, and worked with two friends who were brothers. After one brother died, Bucke and the other brother set out across the mountains, in the winter, hoping to reach the coast. The friend died, and Bucke almost froze to death. He was found in time, but his feet were frozen. He had to have one foot amputated, and part of the other as well. From age 21 he lived 40 years in pain, except for a few hours at a time.

An inheritance from his mother allowed him to attend McGill Medical School, where he graduated with high honors. He married and began to raise his family. He was especially interested in working with the insane, and in improving their treatment in hospitals. He loved poetry, especially Whitman, and memorized volumes of poetry by heart. He died in 1902, one year after writing his book on Cosmic Consciousness.

Bucke's Experience of Cosmic Consciousness

In the spring of 1867 he had a life-changing experience. He spent the evening with two friends, reading poetry, especially Whitman. He then had a long drive in a carriage. He was very peaceful. He documents his experience:

All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around, as it were, by a flame-colored cloud. For an instant he thought of fire - some sudden conflagration in the great city. In the next (instant) he knew that the light was within himself.

Directly after, there came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness, accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning-flash of the Brahmic Splendor which ever since lightened his life. Upon his heart fell one drop of Brahmic Bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an after-taste of Heaven (Bucke, 1901, Dedication).

How did he react to this experience? Being a doctor who worked with the insane, he was a student of the human mind. He thought of illumination as a rare mental condition. From this sudden awakening he developed the theory that a new kind of consciousness was being developed in humans, and he set out to search for people who had that experience.

He found that in Christian mysticism there were three stages of the mystic's progress: Awakening, Purification, and Illumination. He believed this new development in humans was a new stage of consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, a state of oneness with the Universe, with no fear of death, and an awareness that Love is the basis of the Cosmos.

He set about to find others who had experiences similar to his own, and to learn about the stages of this new development. His book describes 36 people, some of which had "Lesser, Imperfect, and Doubtful Instances." A further description of grades of consciousness which he developed was: Simple Consciousness (like that of the higher animal kingdom), Self Consciousness (awareness of oneself as a distinct entity), and then Cosmic Consciousness (where the first two stages are surpassed by a consciousness of the life and order of the universe, intellectual enlightenment or illumination, moral exaltation, and a consciousness of eternal life. This can be thought of as a new birth, a rising to a higher spiritual plane. Another term he gave for Cosmic Consciousness was "cosmic intuition."

Percepts, Recepts and Concepts

He developed an evolutionary theory of four distinct senses of the intellect, which was an evolutionary approach from simple impressions, to cosmic consciousness. He felt that animals could not rise in this progression beyond simple consciousness, as they lacked self-consciousness and language. (Which we have now seen is not true, especially in the chimpanzees and gorillas who have been taught sign language.)

The first of the four steps was called **percepts**, and it was primarily the quality of excitability, an impression, such as a sound or a seen object, which makes an impression. The being who was limited to this level was very primitive. However, these percepts accumulated

through the generations until a collection of percepts became what is called recepts, or a collection of receipts. The collection of percepts and receipts caused the next stage, concepts, to evolve. This made it possible to give names to a family of objects, such as trees, which stood for the thing itself. As the brain continued to evolve, these concepts evolved into language and the possession of self consciousness.

Bucke thought that humans had savage races, such as the native Australian, which had no signs for thoughts (or written language). Thus they were a more primitive race. (We now know that oral traditions can be very complex and involve a strong code of ethics and cultural specialties. Self-consciousness is present even in chimpanzees, such as Washoe, who taught her child to sign, or the gorilla Koko, who also learned sign language, and expressed his love and grief for his pet cat when it died. A society can be evolved without written language.)

The fourth level of consciousness, the supra conceptual mind, or **Cosmic Consciousness** evolved. This is the mind where the previous levels are combined in humans and surpassed by an intuitional consciousness of the cosmos. Dante called this "Brahmic Splendor," in which a man was trans-humanized into a god. Whitman speaks about it as "ineffable light—light, rare, untellable, lighting the very light—beyond all signs, descriptions, languages."

In this state, the cosmos is not just dead matter, but everything is really immaterial, spiritual and alive. Death becomes an absurdity, and everyone and everything has eternal life. God is the universe, and there is no such thing as evil. Bucke felt this evolutionary theory was now at the brink of the last stage, and that only a few people had entered it. In fact, he had only found 36 people who he believed to have it. (His era was influenced by Darwin's Origins of the Species, and Bucke was most likely trying to evolve a new addition to it.)

The key was the evolution of a sense of Self-Consciousness, which he thought was limited to humans. Illiterate humans and animals were only capable of Simple Consciousness. Plants contain vitality without perception, Bucke thought. (This is also untrue, as described in *The Secret Life of Plants*, which showed plant-human interactions.)

He categorized the characteristics of the person undergoing Cosmic Consciousness as:

1. Subjective light
2. Moral elevation
3. Intellectual illumination
4. Sense of immortality
5. Loss of the fear of death
6. Loss of the sense of sin
7. Sudden and instantaneous awakening
8. Previous intellectual, moral and physical character of the person
9. Age of illumination (usually in the 30's or 40's)

10. An unusual charm of the person, which caused others to be strongly attached to them
11. A transfiguration of the person when the cosmic sense is present

According to Bucke, there are factors which create this illumination. They include: Full maturity. That the person should have a special mother (who is spiritual, with superior mental and moral powers). That the father should have a diverse temperament from the mother. That educational level doesn't matter. The person must have the right mental attitude (one devoted to God above all else).

He found that most of his subjects were men. The experience usually occurred between early spring and late summer. The average age was 39 years, and average age at death was 74 1/2 years. He gives summaries of 43 people, 19 of them he identified by initials only. Some of those named were Moses, Isaiah, Gautama the Buddha, Socrates, Jesus, Paul, Plotinus, Mohammed, Roger Bacon, Dante, Pascal, Madam de Guyon, Swedenborg, Blake, Balzac, and especially Walt Whitman, the poet.

It's amazing that he was able to find out so much about the people he wrote about, 100 years ago. Many of the spiritual books we can find easily today were rare even in the 1950's. There's no way I can do justice to Bucke's detailed descriptions of the people he felt had Cosmic Consciousness. His book must have taken many years to put together. Just as one example, he takes a footnote a page long just to illustrate when Jesus was probably born and died, referring to many obscure references.

It's interesting that Bucke says each of these special people go through a time of trial and temptation, like Jesus in the wilderness facing the devil, and Buddha being tempted during his 49 day ordeal. One of the things Bucke tells is how Jesus was transfigured on the mountain and "his face shone like the sun and his garments became white as light." (Matthew 17, 1-3). This, and other miraculous events, as well as Jesus' superiority to ordinary men in intellectual acuteness, moral elevation, optimism and sense of immortality, suggests that Jesus had entered the state of Cosmic Consciousness.

Plotinus, a Greek philosopher, said:

... how can we know the Infinite? I answer, not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define. The Infinite cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer - in which the divine essence is communicated to you. This is ecstasy" (Bucke, 123-124).

Plotinus says further that this is not a permanent state, and does not often occur to any person (he had three episodes). He says there are different roads by which this state is achieved: by purifying and elevating the mind, the love of beauty of the poet, devotion to the One, and love and prayers of the devout and ardent soul. He says,

It is not enough to become sinless, one must become God. There is an ecstatic approach to it. It is beyond thought, and is a state of perfect passivity and repose. The person retires into the depths of his being, into the *nous*, or plane of ideas. In the last stage, the soul is "as it were swallowed up of divinity, bathed in the light of eternity." (Plotinus, 124).

These points are, I think, the essence of the state of Cosmic Consciousness: it is mostly a temporary state, it often comes after a period of deep darkness or depression, it is beyond thought and self-consciousness, and becomes a state of unity with the Divine.

Prophet Mohammed's experience

Bucke uses the illustration of the Prophet Mohammed's case of illumination. Mohammed was meditating in a cave, and the angel Gabriel came to him in such intolerable splendor that Mohammed fainted. On coming to, Gabriel told him to read (or recite) the words of God. Mohammed told Gabriel that he was unable to read (he was illiterate). After reciting the first chapter of the Koran, the angel said, "Oh, Mohammed, of a verity thou art the Prophet of God! And I am his Angel Gabriel." (Holy Koran, sura 96) It is interesting that Mohammed was so stricken by this vision that he raced home to his wife, Kadijah, and hid under the covers of his bed, telling her what had happened. She became his first disciple.

It was several years before the angel appeared to Mohammed again. He entered into a distinctive state when Gabriel was speaking through him, almost as if he was in a seizure (possibly because the flow of energy was too much for his body to bear). He would repeat the words as the angel dictated them, and his wife and later followers memorized them. Gabriel told them that there was only one God, beyond physical form. This belief caused Mohammed and his group much suffering and persecution, in a time where Arabs were pagans, with 365 gods. He and his followers were driven out into the desert outside Mecca for three years, and many were killed. Finally they emigrated to Medina.

Moses and his Illumination

In the case of Moses, the sudden awareness of the presence of God in a burning bush, with a voice telling him to go to the pharaoh and let the Jews go free, had a similar effect. Moses says that he couldn't do as he was commanded, because could not speak clearly (probably meaning that he stuttered). God then appointed Moses' brother, Aaron, to be the interpreter for Moses, who would speak God's words. (Exodus, 2- 5).

In both the case of Moses and Mohammed, there is the first shock and fear at being given a new role in life, for which they felt inadequate. However, after their illumination we never read about any more doubts, or of self-consciousness, in spite of great persecution and suffering of themselves and their people. It is interesting that when Moses descended from Mt. Sinai, bringing the tablets on which

were carved the 10 Commandments, his face was so bright that he had to wear a veil, because his shining face made his people afraid to look at him (Exodus, 34: 30, 35).

St. John of the Cross

Another interesting case chosen by Bucke was that of St. John of the Cross (John Yepes). He was born in 1542 in Spain, and died in 1591. He became a Carmelite Friar. He practiced excessive religious austerities, so excessive that he was imprisoned for them. He went through a period of interior desolation (later called "the Dark Night of the Soul"), which is one of the steps in many enlightened people's journey. His mind was assaulted by devils who showed him violent temptations. He felt an interior desolation, where he perceived Hell opening, ready to swallow him up.

Then he had periods of interior delights and heavenly sweetness, followed by further depression, then more ecstasy. He was in prison when he first experienced Cosmic Consciousness. He was 36 years old, and had been in prison for eight months. His prison cell was so filled with light sometimes that he, like St. Paul, temporarily became blind. After this he started writing about his experiences.

St. John of the Cross emphasized that there must be suppression and effacement of thought before the spiritual transformation can occur. One must be absent to the outer world. He says, "On this road, therefore, to have our own faculties in darkness is to see the light (Bucke, p.146)."

This state is so deep that the person seems unconscious, and is unaware of time. Upon returning, there is no way to express what has happened. It is beyond human language. (These are also common states in other illuminated people.) St. John of the Cross says if this experience happens only once in a person's life, it is as if God is slumbering in the soul, and upon waking up, the experience of that instant affects the whole of life. If it were to be prolonged indefinitely, the soul could not bear it.

This experience, where God overcomes a person, often creates an identification of the person with the universe and everything in it. St. John says, "It is only a soul in union with God that is capable of this profound loving knowledge, for it is itself that union (149)." Bucke says that St. John of the Cross experienced a sense of immortality, feeling that he became one with God, and had no fear of death.

In summing up, Bucke theorizes that humans are evolving gradually into a new race, one of Cosmic Consciousness instead of self-consciousness. This slow change affects a few people now, but in the future, we will be filled with this the Cosmic Sense. These early spiritual travelers show the way.

The Evolution of Cosmic Consciousness Today

It is my feeling that there were many more people in Bucke's time who had entered the state of Cosmic Consciousness or Illumination that he did not know about. For example, many tribal

people have sacred shamans, or prophets, who had a similar progression of events in their lives, which lead them to Cosmic Consciousness. We can think, for example, of Native Americans who went on vision quests, after purification in the sweat lodge, and came back with deep messages that their tribes believed were from holy spirits. Many went through periods of desolation, illness, and struggle before becoming shamans. They resist their new role, as they feel incapable of doing it. These have recently been called the Wounded Healers.

Native American and Shamanistic Experiences

Frank Waters' Book of the Hopi (1963) is one of the few written accounts we have of a native people's cosmology. It was dictated during a three year period to White Bear, a Hopi, who translated the words of some 30 Hopi spokesmen, representing the tribe's wisdom keepers, into English. Until that time the legends (myths, or sacred illuminations) of the Hopi had been kept secret and remembered orally through untold generations.

The story begins with the story of Creation (similar to the Biblical *Genesis*). Then it tells of the people's emergence from the three worlds. There is a description of the Exodus of the prehistoric clans to the ends of the four directions of the Americas, and their return, generations later, to their predestined homeland, in Orabi, Arizona. It is an account entrusted to special members of the clans of the Hopis, who then passed it on orally to future generations.

The book was made at a time when the Hopi elders felt it would help solve the problems of self-government, land claims, and other political and economic controversies. These elders had, by arduous spiritual training since childhood, gained Cosmic Consciousness. Other native peoples, such as the Maori, in New Zealand, and the aboriginal tribes in Australia also have ancient tribal wisdom stories. I believe these accounts could be held equal to any other prophecies in the *Bible*, *Koran*, *Upanishads*, etc. We tend to think that civilizations who have oral sacred traditions are less sophisticated than those who write. This is not the case.

Near Death Experiences

We also have the untold numbers of people who have undergone Near Death Experiences. Dr. Raymond Moody, MD and Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, MD started writing about NDE's in 1975. Until then, the medical community had no idea that their patients had undergone a cosmic experience during the time of clinical death. We developed methods of resuscitating people who had died, and rarely questioned them about what they had experienced during that period and when they came back to life. Dr. Moody coined the term Near Death Experience. Now, there is an International Association of Near Death Studies. I attended one of their conferences, where over 100 people had died and returned. One could overhear their conversations. Many said, "Well during my first death . . . , then during the second one. . ."

Moody and Kubler-Ross discovered that there was a common progression of events perceived by the person who died. They floated

out of the body, could look down and see themselves and the attempts to resuscitate them, then floated down a dark tunnel towards a beautiful light. A beautiful and loving being welcomed them to the place of light (the identity of that being might vary, perhaps an angel, or religious figure, but always filled with light and unconditional love).

Then most adults experienced a flashback of the life they had just finished. (Children usually did not have the flashback, not having lived long enough.) The loving being often told them they had to return to life, in order to learn more. Sometimes the person realized they had children or important duties they hadn't finished. Some even saw dead members of their families, who urged them to return to life. Then they decided, or were told, that they had to return to their bodies, and found themselves being propelled into the body again.

Upon returning to normal consciousness, many remembered the joy of being out of the body, going down the dark tunnel, the beauty of the angelic being who greeted them, and a lack of willingness to return to the present life again. They rarely talked to anybody about their experiences, thinking correctly that doctors and their families wouldn't believe them.

Moody and Kubler-Ross collected many accounts of NDE's, and finally saw the patterns of a typical case. Now there are other documentations of children's NDE's, of blind people (who could see when out of their bodies (Ring and Cooper). Some of the experiences, called "Less Than Positive," have also been studied, and reported on in the Academy conferences by Dr. Barbara Rommer, MD. The important point, for this presentation, is that their experiences were similar to that of other Cosmic Consciousness ones.

On returning to life, they often felt there was a special purpose for which they had returned. They lost their fear of dying, they realized there was a place of great beauty and light awaiting them. There was a new capacity for joy. They frequently had changed their personalities to such an extent, becoming much more loving, that their marriages and work were affected.

John Wren-Lewis (1994) says, "It's more like a basic shift in consciousness whereby life in each moment becomes so vivid that anxiety about future survival, in the body or out of it, simply ceases to be important."

The Academy for Religion and Psychic Research has had many conferences and Journal issues devoted to NDE's and survival after death. They report that life after death is not as we have been led to believe. Dr. Rommer has spoken in several of our conferences about her studies of NDE experiencers, and will do so again in this one. I would refer you to her beautiful talk, reproduced in our Proceedings of the 1998 Annual Conference (96-103). It clearly illustrates cases of complete transformations of consciousness after a NDE.

Cases in Past-Life Therapy or Spontaneous Past Life Memories

NDE's are sudden happenings. On the other hand, remembering past lives can be either spontaneous, or in a hypnotic state with the

therapist as a guide. In past-life therapy, the therapist helps clients go back to a time in the past, and experience a purported past life, which illustrates a problem that is occurring in the present. After viewing the life, clients go to the death in that life, and are asked to wait until something more happens. Their experience is usually one of floating above the dead body of the past-life person, detaching from any connection to it, and then seeing a light. Most people then return to another life with the same theme. (They often don't realize that their initial theme is involved until the discussion with the therapist at the end of the session.)

Those who have meditated and know how to focus their attention, however, frequently find themselves in other dimensions or planes, similar to those in Near Death Experiences. These are most often at what could be termed a faster vibration, where the material body becomes a body of light. This often happens when the therapist and client are both in an altered state, and the client's brain waves are affected by those of the therapist (as shown in Mind Mirror studies).

This does not happen often, however. But when it does, the person often returns to this life in a transformed state. They feel about 9 feet tall, and that they can't fit into their bodies any more. (They gradually shrink and their present-day consciousness goes into the body.) They seem radiant, and aware that they now are no longer afraid of death. Sometimes the body is healed through this process. (My studies show 68 different kinds of physical healing during Past-Life Therapy.) (Clark, 1995, 192).

In order to reach a Cosmic Consciousness experience in Past-Life Therapy, I found that the dense body of matter had to change by vibrating at the same frequency as the plane of light which they were perceiving. For example, I might see a pillar of light, and consciously increase my energy, (like turning up a rheostat to make the light brighter) and walk into that pillar, and look out of its "eyes." Then I could see other beings of light and the place where they lived. It seems that we must have a body similar to those in other planes or dimensions before we can enter it.

I found during my training as a Past-Life Therapist that beings would walk into my image of my physical body, and then I would be them (or, more likely, they were me in another dimension). In my book, *Past Life Therapy, the State of the Art* (1995), I discovered that 89% of the survey subjects had an experience of inner light during the session, 97% found the light experience to be healing, and 86% remembered realms of light. (Clark, 1995, 127).

Most lives induced by a therapist do not have enough details to prove whether or not they are factual. Spontaneous past-life memories, on the other hand, are more likely to have verifiable data. Dr. Ian Stevenson, MD, has been the best known pioneer in study of spontaneous past-life memories. His most recent book reports about children in the present who remembered dying violently in a recent past life. They were unique because they had either birthmarks or deformities which matched the hospital records describing their

death in the previous life. Stevenson feels this is a strong evidence for life after death (1997).

Kundalini Experiences

Briefly, one can say that the experience of kundalini awakening (both spontaneously and through a spiritual path), also transforms consciousness. (Kundalini involves becoming aware of energy centers in the etheric body, called chakras.) Much has been written about it recently, as it is happening more frequently. It is still unusual, and most Western spiritual paths are not prepared to deal with it. Some spiritual groups actually encourage the kundalini awakening, through spiritual practices of pranayama (breath control) and mantras (repetition of sacred words or phrases), and the presence of the teacher. Persons who are Sikhs, those in Siddha Yoga, a few Sufi schools, and Tantra Yoga groups are among those.

Academy Board Member Ravinda Kumar, Ph.D., has begun an association in India to foster awareness of the kundalini experience. He also wrote about his own awakening, and how it transformed his life. (1999.) He will be speaking further about the kundalini experience in this conference.

Gopi Krishna's book, *Kundalini* was one of the first published in the West. His experience was a sudden one. He, like Bucke, predicted that kundalini awakening was going to become much more frequent. His description of the physical effects of this awakening, and what to do about them, was most helpful to me in dealing with my own kundalini process, which has taken many years, often with great discomfort. *Kundalini: Evolution and Enlightenment* (1990), edited by John White, follows up on Gopi Krishna's book and also describes the experiences of many spiritual teachers with kundalini.

Cosmic Consciousness Revisited

Based on Bucke's findings, Robert M. May wrote *Cosmic Consciousness Revisited* (1991). His approach is much more psychological than Bucke's. It is valuable because it brings Bucke's theories up to date, and aligns them with the history of schools of psychology since Freud's time, and reports on other cases. May recounts the limitations of the Behaviorism of John B. Watson, and it's banishment of consciousness from psychological studies. He shows how Freud reduced religious experiences to a neurosis. It is not until Carl Jung that we begin to find an opening. Jung's own experience with an inner character, Philemon, and his discovery of the importance of the mandala as a form of archetypal revelation, brought forth his *Red Book*, where he drew impressions of his visual revelations.

Unfortunately, his family disapproved of his leanings toward a transpersonal viewpoint, and have either destroyed or hidden his later works which might have opened the field earlier (from a talk on Jung by his grandson, at a conference I attended).

Unlike Watson's soulless behaviorism and atheism, Jung, starting at the age of 3 had spiritual visions. They often conflicted with his

father's teachings as a Protestant minister. His father later went through a desolate period where he lost his faith, and died soon after.

Jung's path was one of *experience*, a mystical approach, instead of one of *dogma*. Jung's spiritual journey took five years, between 1913 and 1918, age 38-43. He called this experience the Journey from ego to Self, or individuation. He said "The years when I was pursuing my inner images were the most important of my life - in them everything essential was decided. . . It was the *prima materia* for a lifetime's work (May, 193).

However, May points out, that Jung did not really believe in mystical experience. He disparaged Cosmic Consciousness as the "unconscious" (204). However, much later when he was in his eighties, Jung was asked if he believed in God. Jung replied, I do not believe, *I know*" (206). So the missing pieces of Jung's works may have showed this change in his awareness. Other writers to note include: Yogananda, Gurdjieff, Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof, Masters and Houston, Charles Tart, Ken Wilber, Inayat Khan, and numerous other spiritual teachers, quantum physicists and Transpersonal Psychologists.

The Life of an Enlightened Person

We must consider what the everyday life of the enlightened or illuminated person would be. One could be at this stage, and be dysfunctional in daily life. I think of the Shavite sage, Baba Sri Ram Omkarnath. He spent the majority of his time in the state of Samadhi, far from awareness of his everyday life. It is said that when he was hungry, he put out his hand, and his followers put an apple in it. When he had taken out the energy through his hand, he dropped the apple. When there was unrest in India, he was carried to that place, so his energy could change the situation.

He and Pir Vilayat Khan met, and both went into samadhi, and stayed in it so long that the people with Pir Vilayat were worried that he would miss his plane. However, Pir Vilayat did come back to normal awareness. A picture of them shows such a radiant ecstasy, as if their souls were rejoicing in their unity, and joy at finding someone at their level of development. A poem to God by Pir Vilayat's father, Hazrat Inayat Khan, reflects this situation:

When we are face to face, Beloved, I do not
know whether to call Thee me, or me Thee!

I see myself when Thou art not before me;
when I see Thee my self is lost to view.

I consider it good fortune when Thou art alone
with me, but when I am not there at all, I think
it the greatest blessing (Khan, 1978, #531, 60).

What may be the end-result of worldwide Cosmic Consciousness?

As we have seen, more and more people are evolving to a state of Cosmic Consciousness. Where do we go from here? Robert Ellwood reports a future where humans will gradually grow in spirituality and

love. Along with this will come expansion of psychic and mystical capabilities. Biological engineering and neuro-technological techniques will make it possible for evolution into a trans-human stage, the linking of all minds into a supermind. At that point (perhaps a thousand years from now) humans would be changed into virtually a whole new order of life. The individual self would become radio-telepathically-linked to the collective mind. We will eventually move together toward a single transcendent consciousness capable of almost unimaginable wisdom, power and bliss. In that buddhic mind, consciousness and all experience will be united and fulfilled in a way that is now only potential and barely felt by most (85-90).

The priest-philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardan (1959, 261) expresses a similar view, saying: "... a vast realm of the Ultra-Human lies ahead of us." Bucke adds: "This new race is in act of being born from us, and in the near future it will occupy and possess the earth" (384).

Conclusion

No one could number the enlightened people on earth today, as Bucke thought he had done. With the millions of people who have had Near Death Experiences and those transformed by work in spiritual paths, we can say that there are various levels of enlightenment or cosmic consciousness, and a person can inhabit these stages temporarily as the situation calls for it. It most likely is rarely a permanent state, but fluctuates.

As far as spiritual paths, I would hazard a guess that few people reach the end of their spiritual path, and become enlightened. Some of them who do "graduate" continue on in the world, serving quietly, and a small minority become so dissociated from their personal self that they must be cared for. I will address this in more detail in my short panel discussion. I also presented a talk in the 1999 Academy Conference, "Dying to the Personal Self and Becoming the True Self" and refer you to the *Proceedings* of that conference for more information about the Sufi method of transformation.

The assumption is: if the personal self has been overcome by a state of cosmic consciousness, that original personality is gone, and God then speaks through their body. It is God who hears and sees and lives in that person. Usually this is a transient state, like being a channel for God, then returning to a outwardly appearing normal life. This is the state of prophets and saints.

Those who make the mistake of claiming to be God, run the hazard of being martyred, like Al Hallaj, an Islamic Sufi mystic, who said "An'l Haqq" ("I am the Truth") (in 922 AD), and was brutally tortured and crucified. There are no God-men or Avatars in Islam, but there are in Hinduism. And, of course, many Christian denominations believe Jesus Christ and God are One.

Hazrat Inayat Khan, was asked, "Who do you think was the most enlightened, Buddha or Jesus?" Inayat Khan answered, "You would have to be at their level to make that kind of evaluation."

And, I would add, those who are enlightened don't go around saying they are enlightened. Their awe-inspiring presence is enough for discriminating people to know it. Or, conversely, they may seem to be very ordinary, a tactic used to be able to do their work unnoticed. A deep humility is felt in them, because they know, from their state of Unity with the Divine Beloved, that only God is real.

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THE THRESHOLD

by Rabia Clark

Standing on the threshold
between the two worlds,
I step back into the
peaceful darkness.

Coming forward again,
the world manifests
in all its majestic glory.
Inside and outside,
there is only Oneness.

Straddling the horse who lives
on this thin bridge,
I ride over the rainbow,
into the heart of joy.

Riding faster and faster, I
suddenly burst into light,
sending this illumination
everywhere.

HOW MY NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE LED TO MY "SEARCHING FOR ETERNITY"

Donald R. Morse, DDS, Ph.D.

"They come and they go and they trot and they dance, and never a word about death. All well and good. Yet when death does come - to them, their wives, their children, their friends - catching them unawares and unprepared, then what storms of passion overwhelm them, what cries, what fury, what despair!" (deMontaigne, M. The Complete Essays. Penguin Books, New York, 1987, p. 95).

"It is well-known that we cannot imagine ourselves not existing. We can imagine ourselves being out of the body and looking down upon a world without us, we can imagine being at our own funerals, or reading our own obituaries. But imagining that we have ceased to exist - it's something we are just incapable of doing." (Perry, Michael, The Soul and its Immortality. The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, Bloomfield, CT, 1995, p. 24).

It all started in June, 1983 when I took a six-month sabbatical from Temple University, where I was a Professor of Endodontology, to do research on the effects of stress and relaxation on the salivary glands. Aside from a bout with colitis when I was 10 years old and childhood and young adult attacks of asthma, I had been quite healthy. I had been eating well and exercising regularly. So it was quite a shock when on a sunny June day, I came down with a severe disease with the intriguing name of *giardiasis*. It was caused by an intestinal parasite, *Giardia lamblia*.

The symptoms were severe - unrelenting abdominal cramps, alternating constipating and diarrhea but mainly the former. The medications, quinacrine and Flagyl (R), helped temporarily but then the cramping returned with a vengeance. I became very anxious and had to be hospitalized. Unfortunately, my bed was next to a patient dying from colon cancer and unlike the situation when my father was dying from cancer (he had been told nothing about his disease), this patient's doctor was giving him a vivid description of his cancer and its ultimate outcome. This only added to my anxiety as I recalled my father's agonizing death and was convinced that my unrelenting pain was related to cancer. In addition to the anxiety created by my roommate's condition, I had a bizarre psychological reaction to quinacrine.

The doctors considered that I had recovered from *giardiasis* and that I now had developed a mental condition that had to be treated in a psychiatric hospital. So I was transferred to a large facility in Philadelphia that looked like a country estate with several buildings and beautiful lawns and gardens.

On a bright Tuesday morning, I went outside. I walked around the grounds. Then I decided to jog. After a few moments, I felt myself spinning around and around in ever widening circles. Then the sounds of the world became more and more quiet. Voices of people and songs of birds began to slow down. It seems that the faster I spun, the slower and less distinct the outside sounds became. Then I heard my heartbeat. First, it was very rapid and loud. Then, when it was beating so fast that I thought it would burst through my chest, it began to slow down. Slower and slower my heart pulsed, and then I could feel it no longer. I quickly fell to the ground, and my heart

stopped beating. At least, I no longer heard it. Was I dead? I had no idea, but instead of seeing nothingness, I first saw pitch darkness and then an incredibly beautiful bright, white light. It enveloped me so that I could see nothing but this light. I was not afraid. I felt wonderfully secure, warm and serene. No one came to greet me but I felt a loving benevolent presence beside me.

Then in rapid succession, I saw my whole life flash before me: the temper tantrums of my childhood, my winning a dart-throwing contest, my hospital bout with colitis, the asthma attacks, the family visits to Stamford, Connecticut, throwing an opposing player out at home plate, shooting a winning basket, crying when the New York Giants lost a baseball game, seeing my father die an agonizing death from lung cancer, getting married on a cloudy day in Brooklyn, honeymooning in Bermuda, seeing each one of my three children being born, watching a developing rainbow in Las Vegas with my wife and children, vacationing with my wife in Rome, doing a surgical procedure on the day that John Kennedy was killed, watching my mother wither away from Alzheimer's disease, getting the Temple University research award, falling out of a canoe and later contracting *giardiasis*, going out for a jog on the hospital grounds, spinning around, and falling to the ground.

Then the review ended abruptly. I left my body, flew above the clouds and arrived at the Mt. Eden Cemetery in Valhalla, New York - the same cemetery where my mother and father are buried. At this point, everything was vague. I knew I was being buried but I couldn't really see. I just had the feeling it was happening. Just as quickly as I had arrived there, I was gone. Now it was another day. I was reading the obituary column of the Philadelphia Inquirer. I could not discern what was written about me, but I was certain that I saw my name. Strangely, seeing my funeral and reading my obituary were not frightening. Was it because I had been enveloped by that wonderful light and had felt that caring presence? I don't know, because the next thing I knew I was inside the hospital, and felt the sharp pain of an injection. The injection revived me and brought me back to life, so to speak. Had I experienced another plane or was it merely an hallucination? At the time I wasn't sure.

It took a few months of treatment with antianxiety and antidepressant medications, but I recovered just in time to go back to teaching. As a scientist, I considered my experience with the wonderful light, blissful feelings, benevolent presence, life review, and out-of-body experience (OBE) in which I read my obituary and saw my funeral, to be an hallucination. Nevertheless, the experience changed my life. I was the most productive I had ever been. For the next twelve years, I was busy teaching, doing research, writing over 100 articles and six books, practicing, and enjoying life.

Then in 1995, all hell broke loose. After having retired from Temple University two years previously, none of my secondary career plans had been realized. Several friends, relatives, and family members in their 60's died. My cousin, Ernie, died of throat cancer; my cousin, Edith, died of uterine cancer. Divorces and separations cropped up. Several friends of my wife, Diane, and myself and/or their spouses who lived in the area, died. And worst of all, my beloved sister, Ruth, passed away at the age of 62 from a heart attack. I couldn't believe it. Ruth had a fine figure, exercised, meditated regularly, had a decent diet, and had a good outlook on life.

This combination of life stress events was enough to throw me into a turmoil. I came down with "General Anxiety Disorder," and I started to think about death - a subject that I had been able to avoid for 12 years (since my bout with *giardiasis*). I couldn't meditate; I couldn't concentrate; I couldn't sleep well; I couldn't exercise; food didn't taste well; and worst of all, I developed two alternating symptoms: severe abdominal cramps (just like I had back in 1983 when I suffered from the aftermath of *giardiasis*); and neuralgic-like headaches.

Knowing all about stress management doesn't insulate a person from coming down with a stress-related disorder. If the life stressors are numerous and severe, no one is immune. So I saw a psychiatrist. With a combination of cognitive therapy and a low dose of an anti-anxiety agent and antidepressant, I recovered.

I busied myself with watercolor painting, regular workouts at the gym, working as an endodontist one day a week, and taking vacations. I also read everything I could find about death anxiety. I subsequently had two articles published about it. But I still was not certain about the reality of the soul, the afterlife and God.

I read Raymond Moody's book, *Life After Life*, on near-death experiences and then realized that what happened to me in 1983 was not an hallucination but a near-death experience. I found out that although most aspects of my NDE were similar to many other NDEs, the experiences of observing my funeral and reading my obituary were different from other people's NDEs.

"Man always dies before he's fully born." (Anonymous)

A person does not have to be near death to have a near-death experience. At the time, I was certain that I was dying, but later found out that I had been nowhere near death. Yet the experience was so profound that it affected me for the rest of my life. The spiritual journey to conquer the fear of death started with my NDE. In essence, I was reborn.

My own NDE set the stage for my journey to overcome death anxiety. It was important to find out whether or not I had conquered death anxiety. To do that, I had to begin my spiritual journey. There would be several paths on the journey and since I had a near-death experience myself, I decided that the first path would be NDEs.

I confronted the fear of death and began my search for eternity by reflecting upon my own NDE. I interviewed many people (scientists, religious leaders, teachers, health care practitioners, authors, near-death survivors, holocaust victims, and psychics). I also read many books and cruised the internet for information about religion, mysticism, cosmology, NDEs, OBEs, apparitions, visions, dreams, past life regression, seances, mediums, and related subjects. As a result, I learned a great deal more about death anxiety and how to cope with it. As a result of this research, I wrote a book, *Searching for Eternity: A Scientist's Spiritual Journey to Overcome Death Anxiety* (Eagle Wing Books, Memphis, TN). Although no one can claim absolute knowledge about the future, I no longer have lingering doubts. Considering this, I felt obliged to share my spiritual journey here.

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DEPERSONALIZATION AND THE SPIRITUAL PROCESS

by Rabia Clark, Ph.D.

I want to explore a feature of the process of acquiring "Cosmic Consciousness" which may not have been addressed before. This is the idea that some people who are experiencing these unusual states of awareness may go through (or get stuck in) episodes of what might be called "a spiritual type of depersonalization disorder" according to the *DSM IV*, (the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) (488):

Features of this include a sensation of being an outside observer of one's mental processes, one's body, or parts of one's body.

Actually, depersonalization is a common experience, and it is only a problem if the symptoms cause distress and impairment in functioning. During this situation, the person is still aware of everyday reality, but feels disconnected with it.

The *DSM IV* continues:

Voluntarily induced experiences of depersonalization or derealization form part of meditative and trance practices that are prevalent in many religions and cultures and should not be confused with Depersonalization Disorder (p.488).

U.G.'s Experience

I will briefly tell about the experience of Uppaluri Gopala Krishnamurti (U.G.), who is a prime example of this. The book about him is from conversations, which were recorded by a friend, James Brodski (1973).

His experience of enlightenment began when he was 49 years old. He had grown up in an upper-middle class Brahman family in India. His mother died soon after he was born, and she had said that U.G. was born "to a destiny immeasurably high." His grandfather took this statement very seriously, and gave up his law practice to devote himself to U.G.'s upbringing and education. U.G. was exposed to both Theosophy, Hinduism, and Vedanta from an early age. Every morning teachers would come to read the *Upanishads* and other sacred books to him for two hours.

He was surrounded by many holy men, who talked about *moksha*, or liberation. He spent 7 years practicing yoga and meditation, and then decided the unusual states of *samadhi* were just an illusion of the mind. He found that there is no such thing as enlightenment, that there is no self to realize.

He studied with the well-known Theosophy teacher, Jiddu Krishnamurti for seven years. At the end he felt he still hadn't discovered what was behind all the abstractions he had been listening to, and said, "Come on, is there *anything* behind the abstractions which you are throwing at me?"

Jiddu Krishnamurti said, "You have no way of *knowing* it for yourself.

Jiddu Krishnamurti said, "You have no way of *knowing* it for yourself.

U.G. said, "If I have no way of knowing it, you have no way of communicating it. What the hell are we doing? I've wasted seven years. Goodbye, I don't want to see you again." Then he left.

U.G. traveled all over the world, lecturing. He married and had four children. By 1961 his money ran out, and he sent his family back to India, and he went to London. He felt the onset of many psychic powers, and an upheaval within himself which he could not control, which lasted six years. The last three years he just wandered around the streets, in a state similar to that mystics call "the dark night of the soul." He characterized it as a "simple withering away of the will." He was constantly trying to understand the state of consciousness of Jesus, Buddha and others, and this "fundamental question" of how their state of consciousness differed from his own plagued him for many years.

During this time he had acquired many psychic phenomena, like kundalini, telepathy and emitting light, and yet the fundamental question, "What is that state?" continued to be foremost in his mind. He felt he had not arrived anywhere during all his studies. Then, suddenly, the question just disappeared. He discovered that his fundamental question had no answer.

He found it to be a physiological phenomenon. U.G. said it was "a sudden explosion inside, blasting, as it were, every cell, every nerve and every gland in my body (19)." With that explosion he discovered that the continuity of thought is an illusion. The "I" center which links up thoughts had disappeared. He found it was an irreversible change. During a six day process he felt each sense disappear, one at a time.

He found his mind was in a "declutched state." He couldn't recognize tomato soup, for example, and when told what it was he immediately forgot. This unreal state became permanent. He said when someone asked him a question, the mind comes with an answer, and when the mind was no longer needed, it disappeared.

Even his vision changed. It seemed as if things coming towards him moved through him, as if his eyes were a camera. He no longer blinked his eyes. When he heard noises, they seemed to originate inside him. On the sixth day his body suddenly felt like it disappeared. He could feel the touch of his finger on his body, but he felt his body had gone away, and it never came back. He felt like he was dying, a process which lasted 49 minutes. At that point he felt dead. Then sometime later, he felt awareness again. He still had the changes in his senses, which he called, "The calamity."

For the next six months he had outbursts of tremendous energy which were very painful. They seemed to be enveloping him, descending upon him, and he couldn't do anything about it. When he lay down, he felt like ants were crawling on him. Later he entered a process of combustion of his thoughts, which covered his whole body with ash from the tremendous heat. He accepted all this as just a physiological phenomenon. It wasn't psychological, mystical, or religious. It was a

process of flushing out everything considered sacred or holy, of all his thoughts, through visions.

He found himself taking the shape of Buddha, Jesus and other beings, even women saints (and his body would temporarily acquire female organs.) Each of these states did not last long. It was like expelling out everything in the consciousness, and finally arriving at a primeval, primordial state of consciousness. This three year process ended and he found that all knowledge was unreachable. He didn't know what he was looking at, (a cow or a horse, for example) and he couldn't do anything about it. It seemed to be a permanent state of *samadhi*.

He ended his conversation by saying:

I have no particular message for mankind, except to say that all holy systems for obtaining enlightenment are bunk, and that all talk of arriving at a psychological mutation through awareness is poppycock. **Psychological** mutation is impossible. The natural state (enlightenment) can happen only through **biological** mutation (32).

Why This Man's Experiences Were So Fascinating for Me

I found myself in similar (but less extreme) situations, during the past 25 years. I too had been plagued since childhood with the existential questions of the meaning of life and death, and who was God, and why was I here? U.G.'s process helped me understand that what was happening to me was a normal part of spiritual development, and reassured me.

I eventually discovered the spiritual path of Sufism, when I was 40. Prior to that I had studied Sylva Mind Control and hypnosis, and was able to enter a deep trance at will. This made my progress much more rapid and intense than normal.

I also went through the "dark night of the soul" experience for about 3 years: it is as if one is alone in the universe, God didn't exist, everything was meaningless. I was reassured by my more advanced friend when he gave it that name, and said, "Don't worry, it'll only take 2-3 years to get over." He was right.

Kundalini energy broke out spontaneously, after being around the same friend, whose energy field was very strong. Somehow, I "caught" it from him. That was a very long, difficult, and painful process, lasting at least 15 years. I too felt like ants were crawling on me, and even went for an exam at the Department of Health to see if I had picked up cooties or other microscopic bugs! They didn't find anything. I got a laugh out of that! So I just figured out it was another symptom of the kundalini process. I'd get up in the middle of the night and ride a stationary bicycle until the feeling stopped.

I found that chanting the sacred names of God in Arabic would trigger off energy running in the body, and would involuntarily rock me back and forth or side to side. It was out of my control. A ten-day Sufi guided retreat caused out-of-body experiences, and the feeling of eating light for food, as I lay naked in the sun on the mountain. I had been

doing illumination practices for several days. I finally walked down the mountain in the middle of the night and took a cold shower to stop the intense energy.

There was a period when the kundalini started pouring out of my body, like rays of light. I felt like I was burning, and that if I touched someone, I would burn them. It became very exhausting. My teachers didn't know what to do about it. So I stopped meditating, and quit being a vegetarian.

Psychic phenomena kept on even after that. At one stage I discovered myself as particles of twinkling light above the head of my empty body. When someone would speak to me, the voice came from far away, as if through a tube. And my voice also went down to them that way. I wasn't anywhere. The body was just a shell. I ran into walls a lot, as I couldn't feel the edges of my body. Luckily I didn't have to work during those years. It felt like I was stuck in *samadhi* (I don't know how to describe it, just to say I wasn't very functional.)

One day, one of my Sufi students told me, "Rabia you're getting toooo far away!" I had hoped my state wasn't evident, but clearly it was. Gradually, by eating meat and exercising, and meditating less, I got back into my body. It is difficult being in a body, and I look forward to having a body of light instead.

I finally discovered books which described the kundalini process, and found them helpful. Among them were Gopi Krishna's *Kundalini* (1993, out of print; see References for the name of his most recent book), where he described his journey.

Itzhak Bentov's *Stalking the Wild Pendulum* (1988) described the manifestations in a medical way which I found useful. He feels the kundalini energies are a way of excreting stress which has been held in the body. It is part of the evolution of the nervous system, and "is a necessary correlate of spiritual development, toward which all mankind is moving (226)."

I have started meditating again, and the energy has smoothed out. I still feel it in the chakras (energy centers), but it is usually pleasurable instead of painful, and not so distracting. Perhaps my process differs from that of U.G., and from another writer, Bernadette Roberts (1993) because of the Sufi influences, which emphasize finding the Beloved (God), inside ourselves and everyone.

My process continues. I won't go into some of the odd things that have been happening, for lack of time. I'll just say that at this point I feel like I'm standing on the threshold between the inner and outer worlds. The outer world seems like a play on a stage (or a movie), that we sometimes forget isn't real. Shakespeare put it well when he said, "Pity the poor player, strutting about on the stage, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

What's left? I think love is left. Nothing else matters. That seems to frequently be the lesson in Near Death Experiences. Love manifests itself in compassion, forgiveness, kindness, graciousness, affection, empathy, and an understanding heart. God is everyone and everything,

we are all one Unity, and all creation is conscious and aware, and precious.

The Hindu story of the universe being the play of Shiva (God), who is dancing on the body of Mara (ignorance) appeals to me. I no longer care about food, clothes, success, possessions, or accomplishment. There is just being here now, again and again, doing those "assignments" which come my way, and then letting them go again, and going back into the "waiting room" on the threshold between the worlds. I am here to interact in a loving way, and to be of service.

It still feels strange to be so detached. However it doesn't feel abnormal, just another stage of spiritual growth. None of the process has frightened me. I just had to let it unfold. Let's see what comes next! It has certainly been interesting. As U.G. found, it seems to be a continual emptying of everything one desired or wanted, and, for me, filling up with a detached and loving observer of this world, while yearning to return to my real home in that other world behind the threshold. I hope my process won't take me as far out as U.G.'s did.

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God is Love -
three words which open up
an unending realm for the thinker
who desires to probe the depths
of the secret of life.

-Hazrat Inayat Khan

The very first experience indicating the arrival of cosmic consciousness took place in the year 1984 while I was teaching at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. While meditating in the morning hours with closed eyes and without any phenomenal consciousness I heard a big thumping sound as if electricity is jumping between two poles. I got my eyes opened and I saw a thick column of pure White Light standing in front of me at a distance of about 3 to 4 feet. The Light was cooling, soothing and bright and it filled me with immense bliss and happiness. That bliss and inner happiness is an integral part of me ever since. Since that happening I am not much concerned with the phenomenal world around me with regard to material possessions and human relationships. Nothing good or bad really affects me and I am always happy and cheerful. The column of Light was about 6 to 8 inches high and about 4 inches wide. It remained in air for about half to one minute and then slowly it began to flicker and move to the left. It moved to a distance of about 2 to 3 feet and then disappeared.

I continued with my regular practice of chanting of mantras and meditation. Out-of-body travels in astral form while asleep physically, became a regular feature. The body I used to have was similar to the physical body but it was not solid. I could move with whatever speed I liked and I could pass through walls. I saw several different locations in the subtle realms with houses and colonies and people around. There were no kitchens in houses and people used to make their food with the power of thoughts. People would talk there without opening their mouths, simply knowing in mind what the other wants to say. And the reply would be in the same manner. I never felt hungry, thirsty or sexy even after long durations of flights.

In the month of July 1987, while at the University of Zimbabwe, I heard a strange Sound around 2 a.m. when I got up to answer the call of the nature. The Sound resembled the blowing of a conch and it was unbroken. I asked every one in the house if they were hearing any such sound, but they all answered in negative. In the morning Dr. Kirii and an E.N.T. specialist of the university hospital examined me. They did not find anything wrong with the body and told me that perhaps I may have to live with the Sound. Now I know that it was the unstruck Sound the yogis hear through inner ears. It is this Sound which tows the Soul back to the Supersoul through its linkage. My state of peace and inner happiness became more magnified and stabilized. However, I continued with chanting of mantras and meditation. Many times I would see from the ceiling of the room my body sitting in the chair and meditating. Sometimes I would see my duplicate smiling and looking at me.

In the month of October 1987 I had the "experience of death" while meditating around 5 a.m. That day I was feeling very vulnerable. I was praying to God for help, since I had no one to guide me and tell me about how to get Him. I was crying and tears were flowing through my eyes. The rosary of beads had fallen through my hand and I had no sense of the world outside. Suddenly I saw my dead body being carried by four people on their shoulders and they were repeating the words, "Ravindra Kumar is dead." And in a little while I emerged from the engrossing miserable situation, finding myself relieved, peaceful, happy, as if a new horizon had opened before me. The state of bliss and cheerfulness became so overwhelming that I got up from the chair and came out of my room. It was around 6 a.m. and the sunlight was about to break in Zimbabwe. In that state of happiness I went out for a long walk as usual. I briefly told others about the episode but no one could really feel concerned about it. In about two hours time I left for the department as usual, although I was in no mood to take lectures that day. I began to lose interest in mathematics from that day.

I still continued with the chanting of mantras and meditation as usual. In about two weeks time I was about to take tea in the evening. Suddenly my body began to twist like a snake, my tongue appeared to be coming out of my mouth and I felt immense heating around the crown of my head. I ran out of the house and took a brisk walk for about half an hour and then I cycled at home for about 20 minutes. I took some cold drink and then lied down in the bed. The university doctor examined me and heard every detail of the experience. He told me in clear words that if I were not maintaining a very good health, I could have been paralyzed that day. He asked me to discontinue all meditative practices from that day and not to lecture in the university for two weeks. From that day in October 1987, I discontinued all kinds of chanting and meditation.

And then began a wonderful series of experiences. Although I stopped meditation but I continued to pray in the mornings. Three times in the period of two months I witnessed Mother Goddess clad in red sari (Indian dress) and nice bangles, sitting and smiling at me. What a beautiful face and eyes She had. I saw myself in a white dress bowing down to her and She was blessing me with Her right hand on my head. After these visions I began to remain very cheerful and contented. My focus began to shift from mathematics to religion and parapsychology. I began to write articles based on my experiences, which were eventually published in JRPR.

I had many out-of-body travels but they were different from the ones I used to have earlier. Now I would find myself without a body on a peaceful planet, and others around were also without a body, either as a point of light or a circle of light. I could see my Guru also in dimensionless form giving me telepathic directions. I saw a translucent fortress with two gates; through one of them Souls were entering and through the other they were coming out. The planet was full of bluish-green light without any source of light, that is, the planet was self-illuminated. There was beautiful grass on the ground, and lovely green trees laden with fruits. My Guru directed me to move forward. Suddenly I was conscious of my bodiless existence as a point, with thinking, feeling and memories as usual. I crossed over a wide and deep blue river, moving on a hair-wide bridge, and arriving in the midst of a group of mountains. Suddenly I returned into my body. On another occasion I was on the planet with so many Souls around with perfect peace and inner happiness. These are the planets talked about by Swami Prabhupad and also by Urantia Book, where qualified Souls retire and live finally.

During December 1989 I was attending a mathematical conference in Malawi, Southern Africa. The atmosphere was very peaceful and the mind was fully relaxed. One evening I suddenly experienced a sort of dying, my head falling down on one side of my neck, and I felt connected to an "Infinite Void." This was initially very horrifying but soon I achieved stability. A feeling of huge nothingness, likeable to the condition which prevailed before God said, "Let there be light." It was the "hiranyagarbha" of the Vedas, which stored everything and where from everything originated at the instance of formless God.

Conclusion: Systematic opening of the seven chakras and then awakening of Kundalini showed me all the levels of existence from "astral body" to "Soul body" to "nothingness." One may have to choose one's goal for final destination, and then find means to navigate to that goal. Which plane of existence would you choose to live on, if the option is available to you? For yogis who have experienced death while still living, the nature or God may perhaps automatically decide the goal. Having witnessed oneself as dimensionless Soul or Atman, and thus getting intuitive knowledge of God, since Soul is akin to God, one is out of the chain of further incarnation. In the process, formless God also appears in the cherished form of devotee, such as Mother Goddess or Lord Krishna or Lord Jesus Christ etc. However, one

may like to meditate further to know the working of the Universe, and the role one can play in providing help towards Spiritual Development of all brothers and sisters on this and other planets. In other words, to know the will of God on one's future involvement in God's plan. There are two things to be noted: (I) Once the spiritual progress has been made to a certain stage, it is irreversible, (II) There is always one more step, since the process to God is ongoing.

Mission: A candle put under a bowl of water is incapable of producing boiling point in the water. However, if a burner of 100 watts is used, the water will boil quickly and get converted into steam. Even so, ordinary practices of praying to God an hour a day or going to places of worship on weekends only for few hours is like burning a candle under water. You need different kinds of "spiritual practices" to precipitate the energy within, to a boiling point. And then, just as water converts into steam, man will convert into god. I am teaching Integral Path which combines different methods to produce the "atomic blast" within the practitioner in a single lifetime. If the method is followed rigidly, Kundalini can awaken and "third eye" can open within few years, if God willing. For this I have written 3 normal books on Numerology, Spiritual Awakening and Kundalini. Llewellyn Worldwide Ltd. has republished the book on Kundalini, originally published in India, in USA, and it has also been translated in Russian for distribution in USSR and other countries. 8 mini books have appeared this year on Hatha Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Chakras and Nadis, Kundalini Yoga, Dreams, Aura, Mantras and Psychic Development. I set up the Academy of Kundalini Yoga and Quantum Soul (AKYQS), which provides the training and publishes a quarterly bulletin on the subject.

Appeal: AKYQS has centers at four places-Florida, Copenhagen, London and Delhi. These centers are running at houses of friends with very little facilities and limited finances. It is my cherished dream to have proper "teaching centers" on open land outside the city, with a good library, lecture rooms, yoga hall, publication units, and rooms for stay. However, because of my pre-occupation with writing and traveling, I am not getting enough time to organize. I invite people who want to discover their True Self to give comments and suggestions, and help in the mission of AKYQS.

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DOES COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS HAVE A PHYSICAL SUBSTRATE?

Charles Don Keyes, Ph. D., Th. D.

Abstract: This paper is work in progress leading to a book on life after death, and the author invites criticisms. It approaches cosmic consciousness through the transpersonal nature of near-death experiences (NDE's). Their content tends to be universal regardless of the culture in which they occur or their time in history. Furthermore, there is evidence that NDE's often precipitate psychical experience (Psi) as such. The essay asks what causes these transpersonal phenomena and formulates a hypothetical explanation, which is both consistent with natural causality and also preserves their meaning and validity. It argues that NDE's do not prove survival of death, but shows that the same hypothetical model, which explains their transpersonal nature, is also an element in a rationally cogent argument for resurrection (replication) in the biblical sense.

The cosmic brain is the physical substrate of cosmic consciousness and cosmic mind. Near-death experiences (NDE's) and psychical experiences (Psi) are the only instances of cosmic consciousness to be examined, but this does not suggest that there are no other types. As defined here, cosmic consciousness neither implies nor rules out the possibility that the cosmos itself is conscious. The term refers instead to human awareness of transpersonal, non-local reality. Cosmic mind is more than consciousness. It also includes the unconscious storage and transfer of non-local information that make our awareness of transpersonal reality possible. I argue that these processes also preserve the patterns of living beings during the interregnum after they die and before they are resurrected. The hypothetical cosmic brain explains this preservation and these processes according to natural causality. It provides a non-dualistic model of the relation between brain events and mental states both individually and collectively without eliminating their spiritual significance.

The following is a tentative account of an ongoing struggle to understand and articulate ideas that resist expression. It is also a dialogue with sources that have both clarified and challenged the struggle. And it is part of a book in progress on life after death that will

fulfill the promise I made in my *Brain Mystery Light and Dark: The Rhythm and Harmony of Consciousness* [henceforth "BMLD"] in 1999. I argue against the dualistic split between soul and body and reject Platonic immortality in that book, but also say: "This position does not rule out the possibility of viewing life after death as replication. I am planning a new book that will address this question in the light of the conclusions of the present one" (Keyes 1999, p. 152).

Transpersonal Nature of NDE's

At least two types of evidence support the argument that NDE's are transpersonal, the tendencies of their content to be universal and for Psi to accompany them.

First, NDE's contain elements that recur cross-culturally and throughout history. John Beloff's briefest possible account identifies four basic stages in which NDEers find themselves

(a) hovering some distance above their body while watching attempts being made to induce resuscitation; (b) entering a long dark tunnel from which they emerge into a dazzling and glorious pool of light; (c) finding themselves in some kind of paradise where they meet lost loved ones and beg to be allowed to stay but are told to go back as there is still important work to be done on earth; and (d) finding themselves back in their physical body grasping for breath. (Beloff 1997, p. 263)

The austerity of this summary calls attention to some elements of NDE's that tend to be the most universal, but there are significant omissions. For instance, Beloff does not mention the typical epic life review, which Jenny Wade characterizes:

At varying points in this sequence, adults experience a panoramic or fast-action review of their lives. Heretofore obscured metameanings in those events are revealed in an atmosphere of loving discernment regarding mistakes, rather than critical judgment. (Wade 1996, p. 125)

Second, NDE's tend to precipitate Psi (Grosso 1981, 1983, 1984), for instance distant perception. Michael Sabom (1982) and other scientific observers give empirical credibility to this correlation.

We must explain NDE's in terms of natural causality, but Psi, whether with NDE's or elsewhere, violates what C. D. Broad's calls the "basic limiting principles" of natural science that determine traditional materialism's understanding of causality. Paul and Linda Badham summarize these principles as the claims

that thoughts cannot pass from one person to another without some form of the sensory equipment of both being called into play at some stage; that a person cannot have any non-inferential

knowledge of the future; that our volitions can only *directly influence* the movements of our own bodies; and that when a person's body dies, his consciousness either ceases altogether, or at any rate, ceases to be able to manifest itself in any way to those still living on earth. (Badham 1984, p. 90)

Any explanation of the transpersonal nature of NDE's must preserve their spiritual significance even apart from whether or not they are held to prove survival of death. Their tendency to universality is significant in its own right. This is evident from the fact that other experiences besides death can provoke consciousness of some or all their elements. Examples of this include transcendental experience (Jourdan 1994) and drugs (Hirschman and Siegel 1984, Jourdan 1994, and Grof and Halifax 1977). Furthermore, the stages of NDE's have cross-cultural counterparts in literature. Western examples include Homer (Greene 1996) and Plato's allegory of the cave. The Bible also contains numerous instances. At the Exodus the wall of sea on both sides resembles the tunnel passage, and later a light guides the Children of Israel during their journey. Furthermore God is light (John 1:4-5) and St. Paul has what resembles an out of body experience (II Corinthians 12:2-5).

The Search for Causal Explanations of NDE's

My struggle to understand what might cause NDE's began in the winter of 1998 as a part of planning my book on life after death. I put aside for the time being the question of why they often precipitate Psi and tried to hypothesize what might cause their content. Its tendency to be universal revealed the inadequacy of overly subjective and eliminative explanations, for instance the claim that they are merely wish fulfilling hallucinations.

After doing initial general research on NDE's in the library of the International Association for Near-Death Studies, Inc. (East Windsor Hill, CT) in the summer of 1999, I formulated a biological hypothesis based partly on the research of Michael Grosso (1981, 1983, 1984) into the "archetypal" characteristics of NDE's. I argued that genetically based codes conducive to evolutionary survival might explain why their symbolism is cross-cultural and transhistorical. During the fall of the same year, I presented a paper to the Hastings Center (Garrison, NY) examining this hypothesis. I went away with new and unanswered questions. Do the biologically based archetypes of NDE's point beyond the biological realm? Does their content have cosmic significance?

Elizabeth Fenske, Director of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship International (Philadelphia), in a private interview during the summer of 2000, proposed that NDE's might cause Psi because they give access to non-local consciousness. This would also account for the universality of the stages of NDE's. Her explanation does not rule out the biological hypothesis, since genetically based archetypes could participate in non-

then is matter? It is either particles or waves, depending on conditions. Wave states can reduce to particle states. Maintaining a wave state depends more or less on its isolation. Certain circumstances make the wave state collapse into classical particles. There are a number of different hypotheses about how this happens. Roger Penrose and Stewart R. Hammeroff suggest that “non-local” phase entanglement might be one explanation. They write that

all quantum objects that have once interacted are in some sense still connected! When two quantum systems interacted, their wave functions become “phase entangled” so that when one system’s wave function is collapsed, the other system’s wave function, no matter how far away, instantly collapses as well. The non-local connection (“quantum entanglement”) is instantaneous, independent of distance, and implies that the quantum entities, by sharing a wave function, are indivisible. (Hammeroff and Penrose 1996, p. 508)

These scientists hypothesize that consciousness is the “orchestrated” reduction of quantum wave states in the proteins of the brain’s microtubules. According to this model, consciousness arises partly because quantum processes constitute a field non-locally within an individual brain. Could Psi occur when similar quantum processes include more than one brain in a single non-local field?

Goswami explains the transpersonal dimension of Psi and NDE’s as the “correlation of quantum objects.” He argues that if we “accept quantum nonlocality as an established physical aspect of the world in which we live, it becomes easier to conceive of a transcendent domain outside of the manifest domain of space and time” (Goswami 1995, p. 61).

Implicate Order

David Bohm, physicist and philosopher, hypothesizes that the implicate order connects all things in the cosmos, so that objects are not discrete and separate from one another, but exist in it as an unbroken whole. He writes: “Now, the word ‘implicit’ is based on the verb ‘to implicate.’ This means ‘to fold inward’ (as multiplication means ‘folding many times’).” The implicate order touches everything and is everywhere in such a way that “the totality of existence is enfolded within each region of space (and time).” Nothing is ever destroyed, but rather simply “enfolds” back into the implicate order. Objects may disappear or be “destroyed” to human observers, but they still exist in some fashion in it, and the “*total order*” exists in each of them. According to Bohm, “whatever part, element, or aspect we may abstract in thought, this still enfolds the whole and is therefore intrinsically related to the totality from which it has been abstracted” (Bohm 1983, pp 149, 172).

local consciousness. According to her hypothesis, both types of evidence for the transpersonal nature of NDE's have the same source. The non-local storage and transfer of information that cause Psi are also the means by which the basic structures of NDE's are not merely subjective, but shared.

Fenske's hypothesis that a single type of causality might explain both of the transpersonal characteristics of NDE's was the catalyst that lead to the synthesis at the base of this paper's concept of cosmic consciousness. My cosmic brain hypothesis, however, is much earlier than that synthesis. So is my identification of all the models of Psi causality mentioned in the next section. Nevertheless, Fenske introduced me to the research of Amit Goswami (1995) and Michael Talbot (1992) that made it possible to articulate how the two models of Psi I explain below are relevant to NDE's.

The Search for Causal Explanations of Psi

My struggle to understand what might cause Psi goes back to my teens and twenties when first hand vividly detailed clairvoyant and telepathic experiences erased all doubt about the reality of what people called "paranormal" events. Decades passed, as I kept silent about this struggle, even when I wrote *BMLD*. That silence was ironic because my examination of how individual human brains produce consciousness lead me to new insights about how such processes might explain the transfer of consciousness from one brain to another.

The Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory offered consultation on my question of whether "models of individual consciousness are applicable to psychical phenomena" during the spring of 2000. I consulted with physicists there about the possible causal explanations of such anomalies, including hypotheses based on quantum physics, string theory as Brian Greene (1999) views it, and Ervin Laszlo's (1996) search for a unified theory. The outcome of this consultation was new challenges whose explanation would go beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the laboratory's discovery of statistical correlation between consciousness and micro-kinesis attests to the empirical validity of research into Psi. It also attests to the legitimacy of seeking rational explanations for what causes Psi (Jahn and Dunne 1987), provided we are aware of the tentative nature of hypotheses that attempt to do this.

Quantum Phase Entanglement

During 1997 when writing *BMLD*, I hypothesized that the interaction of non-local quantum processes might cause Psi. Physical reality can no longer be described simply as "fixed" material configurations, according to quantum physics. Atoms themselves have been split and are not final. In quantum theory atoms and subatomic particles can behave as particles or as waves (fields of energy). What

then is matter? It is either particles or waves, depending on conditions. Wave states can reduce to particle states. Maintaining a wave state depends more or less on its isolation. Certain circumstances make the wave state collapse into classical particles. There are a number of different hypotheses about how this happens. Roger Penrose and Stewart R. Hameroff suggest that "non-local" phase entanglement might be one explanation. They write that

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Visible and measurable phenomenon are simply aspects of the unity of the implicate order, which underlies all that we see. Everything comes out of it and returns into it. The "implicate" order enfolds the "explicate" order of physical and biological reality. Ervin Laszlo likens this to a vortex:

It has a relatively constant, recurrent and stable form, yet it does not have an existence independent of the fluid in which it appears. The vortex may appear as an independent body, yet its order is derived from the dynamics of the flowing water. In the same way particles appear as independent entities, yet they derive from the underlying "enfolded" order. (Laslow 1996, 138-9)

Holograms illustrate the implicate order, according to Bohm, because each holographic image enfolds the whole of which it is a part. The cosmos itself is holographic. Kenneth Ring tries to explain NDE's in the light of this concept, suggesting that the dimension into which they penetrate is

a realm that is created by *interacting thought structures* [which]... combine to form patterns on a holographic plate. And just as the holographic image appears to be fully real when illuminated by a laser beam, so the images produced by interacting thought-forms appear to be real. (Ring 1979, p. 89)

Talbot suggests that the content of NDE's is outside space and time where "location has no meaning in the frequency domain." He follows Ring in viewing NDE's as "visits to an entirely different level of reality," a superior dimension of the holographic universe, "a realm composed of 'light,' 'higher vibrations,' ... 'frequencies'... Celestial music," an order in which, as Dr. Elizabeth W. Fenske suggests, "thought seems to be light" (Talbot 1991, pp. 247-48).

Cosmic Brain

Cosmic consciousness exists because the physical cosmos itself is like a brain. Just as the human brain has been likened to a cosmos because of its astronomical number of interconnections, this comparison can be reversed. The cosmos itself is analogous to the brain of an individual. Furthermore, it has cybernetic properties, drawing what might be the only viable concept in Frank Tipler's provocative, but defective, argument for resurrection in *The Physics of Immortality* (1994).

The cosmic brain cybernetically records the structure of everything that has been, as well as the history through which all things, animate and inanimate, have passed. It contains their moments non-locally with respect to space and in a nonlinear manner with respect to time. The cosmic brain hypothesis is not about what constitutes physical reality,

but instead the retention of its structures. As a result, it can subsume various theories of physical reality without being tied to any one of them. This generality preserves its viability among the conflicting interpretations of physics today. Reality might be waves, particles, strings, or something as yet unimagined. The cosmic brain remembers the history of its structure as astronomically complex system of mathematical quantity points. The question of how these quantities preserve the good (including its expressions as aesthetic, religious, and ethical symbols) is beyond the scope of this paper.

The cosmic brain remembers what it records without necessarily being conscious of it, just as human brains and computers store information of which they are not aware. This hypothesis means that cosmic consciousness is a part of cosmic mind, which also includes unconscious dimensions. The cosmic brain is the substrate of cosmic mind, both conscious and unconscious.

More accurately, cosmic brain processes and cosmic mental events are identical to one another. The cosmic brain is like individual brains in this sense. *BMLD* argues that brain and mind are two sides of the same reality. Every mental state is a brain event. This is similar to James Ashbrook's argument that "'brain' and 'mind' are interchangeable terms. As the subjective experience of objects, the brain is mind; as an objective system external to conscious experience, the mind is brain" (Ashbrook 1989: 75).

BMLD defends the kind of neurobiological naturalism that safeguards both the identity of mind/brain and the value of life. This position appears paradoxical to conventional thinking, but *BMLD* shows that it is not so in reality. Neuroscientific explanations of noble thoughts and sublime feelings, contrary to popular legend, don't invalidate them. *BMLD* closes up the distance between brain and mind without eliminating the validity of consciousness. The cosmic brain hypothesis extrapolates the same argument from the individual to the cosmic level, thereby overcoming the dualistic split between physical reality and mental states often associated with mystical concepts.

The soul of an individual person is not separate from the body, but a sub-set of the mind/brain unity, as Ashbrook also suggests. He argues that the soul is the "meaningful memory" of symbols that bestow value. Similar to Ashbrook, *BMLD* argues that the

soul is not a substance, not a property, but a process...Soul is brain/mind engaged in the three kinds of symbolic activity that constitute the spiritual dimension of life, namely aesthetics, religion, and ethics. The validity of symbols that express the spiritual dimension of life does not depend upon a mind (or soul) separate from the brain. They are events of the undivided mind/brain unity. (Keyes. 1999, p. 13)

The collective cosmic soul consists of structures or patterns of good things, events, and situations that the cosmic brain remembers both consciously and unconsciously. "Good" here refers to a quality in the created order, not the Creator. It has the practical sense of that which furthers life and well-being.

Charles Hartshorne writes: "God has no separate sense organs or muscles, because all parts of the world directly perform both functions for him. In this sense the world is God's body" (Hartshorne 1964, p. 185). I argue that the cosmos (which includes the world) is neither the body nor brain of God, but the created order. Cosmic mind (including cosmic consciousness) is a part of natural reality, even though it contains analogical images of God.

Resurrection

St. Paul proposes a "spiritual" model of the resurrection which rules out the reconstitution of the corruptible body: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (I Corinthians 15:44). As opposed to immortality, which separates the soul from the body, the resurrection of the spiritually reconstituted body requires the unity of soul and body. The work in progress aims at formulating a logically consistent argument for life after death in the light of this concept. However, the argument's consistency will not prove resurrection empirically. Belief in it continues to be an article of faith, not science, although the rational cogency of the argument shows that this belief is not unreasonable. The argument consists of two elements. The first pertains to the "interregnum" between death and resurrection and the second to resurrection itself.

Interregnum

The structures of our lives that survive death are being produced now during our mortal existence, according to St. Paul. "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1). The structures of this "building" will continue to exist in the cosmic brain as patterns of the life they presently constitute. Individuals do not persist as disembodied spirits after they die, but as structures of embodiment, which the cosmic brain remembers. The same hypothesis that explains the universal nature of NDE's and Psi within the limits of natural philosophy could also account for the storage of structures of life awaiting resurrection during the interregnum.

The Fugue of Love

The second element in the argument for resurrection has not yet been formulated. It wagers beyond empirical evidence that love finally wins as a cosmic force. Love is a contrapuntal process that weaves together many different themes, all the while upholding the main, overriding theme of unifying the good with itself. This fugue of love

continues within the cosmic brain's interregnum until it pushes the resurrection of interrelated individuals over into reality.

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ENTREE TO COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND ENLIGHTENMENT
VIA THE PORTALS OF NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES, DREAMS
AND OTHER SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMING EVENTS

Barbara R. Rommer, M.D.

Cosmic Consciousness may be reached by traversing many portals. Clinical (transient) death experiences, near-death experiences without clinical death, dreams, and other spiritually transforming events may all launch the subject onto the path toward enlightenment. The experience becomes the nexus point of his or her journey. Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, author of "Cosmic Consciousness" had such a spiritually transforming event at age 36, when fully conscious, while riding in a hansom following an evening spent with friends reading Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and Whitman (Bucke 1901, 9).

This year is the 100th anniversary of the publication of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke's book, *Cosmic Consciousness*. Let me allow the book to define its title. It states: "The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is, as its name implies, a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe....Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment or illumination which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence - would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully as striking and more important, both to the individual and to the race than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these come, what may be called a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already (Bucke 1901, 3)." I shall present examples of directly quoted experiences from my own research which illustrate the characteristics that Dr. Bucke defines as cosmic consciousness.

Linda had her experience 26 years ago when she was 21. Her event shows consciousness of the cosmos, of the life and order of the universe, including her understanding of its energy patterns. She stated:

"I was in the emergency room parking lot at Women's Hospital in Philadelphia when I was stung on my neck. The next thing I knew, everything was going black, and I fell to the ground. Someone saw me fall and ran for a stretcher. I was in cardiac arrest. They said I was gone for 5 minutes.

After the blackness, I seemed to wake up in this beautiful crystal room. It was huge! I couldn't see the top or edges of it. It was brighter than the sun, and I wondered why my eyes weren't hurting. And there were the most beautiful violet and yellow and blue colors swirling through this crystal room. I must have thought: 'Where am I?' and I heard a voice that said: 'This is a creation of your

own soul'. I think it sounded like one voice, but if there is such a thing as a group mind, then it was that. I was astounded how my soul could have created something so incredibly big and beautiful! I asked: 'For what purpose was this room created?' It never answered that, but the voice said that it was one of a group that was only able to communicate with people when they had this type of experience, and that it was communication inter-dimensionally. It said I had to go back, and that many years later I would be writing a book. I thought that was crazy, because I just wanted to be a nurse.

I asked them if I would ever hear their voice again, and they said I would. I also asked if this happened to a lot of people. They actually said they had communicated with many, but that most people don't remember because it often takes place in a dream state, or during accidents, or periods of other physical or emotional stress. They said that the rational mind obliterates the information, and that unless you're tuned in to the inner self, which I have labeled intuition, then most people will just block it out.

I felt like I was a spark of energy - a spark of light. I didn't have a form, but I was much more comfortable being that than I am now. When I knew they wouldn't let me stay, I asked 'How do I get back?' They told me to 'just think about getting back'. So I did, and started flying. That's when I started being aware of energy patterns, including the energy pattern of my body, and went right in the top of my head. I opened my eyes, but couldn't talk because of the tube in my mouth.

One day, decades after that, as if someone turned a key in my brain, I got flooded with all this strange information. I was confused and didn't know what was going on. It took about 6 months to finally sort it out. Somehow I was understanding the energy patterns of the universe, including the fact that there is such a thing as male and female energy. So I have written the book, but don't have a clue what to do with it!"

I have read Linda's manuscript. She has never had a course in physics, and yet presents an astounding amount of information and concepts about energy, primarily, which must have been spirit-lead. She'll just need a little help to present the material in a logically flowing, easily readable form.

Dr. Bucke also cites intellectual enlightenment or illumination as a characteristic of cosmic consciousness. Linda manifested this, and Ina does as well. This is how Ina related her spiritually transforming event:

"A most unfamiliar sensation came over me, so I went to lay down on my bed at 7:30 in the evening. Immediately I felt a separation from my body, and I hovered 4 feet above, looking down at myself. I was bewildered and curious. As each second ticked on, I elevated further up toward the bedroom ceiling. I could actually see through the shingles and the plaster to my body. I thought: 'This must surely be death'. I was absolutely frantic. I was shouting out: 'I can't die yet! I'm only 21 years old! I'm in perfect health!' In desperation, I focused all of my will and my concentration on reuniting my soul with my body. But as the seconds ticked on, I continued to rise further above my lifeless body until it was

barely visible. I rose higher and higher. My ascent was becoming faster. My house abated into obscurity, as did the entire street of homes. The nighttime city lights of the entire city of Tucson, in the desert, became like a small, small light bulb, as the familiar coastal outline of the entire United States took shape from above.

Then my attention was diverted to the outline of Europe. Spain stood out significantly, especially the lights of the city that I assumed to be Madrid. At that moment something very strange occurred. Without actually descending, I had laser-like, telescopic vision focused on Madrid. I focused closer and closer. I got there faster and faster, and I saw three men sitting at an outdoor café. I heard their voices very clearly, and to my utter amazement I understood every single word they were saying. At that time I didn't know one word of Spanish! Yet, I comprehended absolutely everything. I was baffled but extremely impressed with this new phenomenon, so I said to myself: 'Let's just try this again.'

I focused over to Asia, where China would be. With this telescopic vision, I focused closer and closer, saw people on the street, got up close to them, and I understood Chinese! Then I flipped over to Germany, same thing. I understood every single language as my focus went down to all these countries. I was astonished at this ability.

Then, very suddenly, something even more magnificent happened. In an instant, I not only understood every language, but I now knew all the answers, all the explanations, all the reasons, all the principals, all the secrets, all the mysteries of science, and all universal laws. I knew everything there was to know about everything on this planet, and the universe, and the cosmos, from the past, the present and the future. I understood absolutely everything! The language didn't matter any more because I knew everything there was to know about life. No sooner did I think of a topic or a question, immediately at that moment, quite easily and naturally, I had total comprehension of everything there was to know about life. I commented to myself that death is extraordinary!

But my ascent continued, and planet earth grew smaller and smaller in the vastness of outer space. But then fear started to take hold of me. I said: 'Please, I don't want to go any further. I like it just where I am. I have all this knowledge so please just leave me here forever.' But earth was now completely lost in the blackness of deep outer space, and I froze in fear!

Then, suddenly, from the corner of my vision, I saw something that looked white. I turned just a little bit to make sure. It was a bright light, and my focus and curiosity was on it as I continued to ascend. The white light became brighter and more brilliant, and I was drawn to it very fast. This white light engulfed me with warmth, with contentment, with comfort, with happiness, with peace, and with tranquillity. All of that overwhelming knowledge, insight, understanding, and wisdom that I had just moments ago no longer had the slightest significance in the least. All of that knowledge was only data. Here, in this white light, was a feeling far superior. Right now I felt God! I felt absolute love! I had arrived at the source - the very essence of everything there is. But it is here that I'm at a total void for words of description.

There I was, engulfed in that brilliant sensation, that was very vivid, very real, and profoundly sublime. But just then I felt a subtle diminishment. The intensity seemed to be fading just a bit. More and more I began to feel descent, and the bright light grew a bit dimmer, and the white was not as white. Lower and lower, I struggled to regain my hold on heaven. But once again I saw the blackness below our states. I said: 'Please help me, I'm slipping back down. Please help me to get back up.' But the blackness engulfed me totally. The descent started to get fast, and the outline of the continents came into view. The United States, the gaping Grand Canyon, the Tucson city lights, the street where I lived, then there was the roof of my house! I passed through the roof, through the ceiling, and hovered about 4 feet above my body. Then, about 12 inches above my body, I put up a frantic, powerful struggle. My hand rose to my forehead, and I was sweating. My heart was pounding like thunder, my muscles were tight and tense, and my nervous system was on overload. I gasped for breath. I turned my head and looked at the clock and it was 8:15. Forty-five minutes had passed and I hadn't died after all. I wept in utter disappointment, resignation and defeat."

Chris is a nurse, working in Alaska. He is truly on a spiritual path. His experience demonstrates what Bucke describes as a moral exaltation and an indescribable feeling of elevation. This was Chris's second out of body experience. The first came to an abrupt halt when he became fearful. He stated:

"It happened in the early fall of 1974. I was just laying down on my bed in the evening. I felt my whole body get energized again, almost stiff, bursting with so much energy, that it was almost like a paralysis. My whole body was vibrating, fast, and shaking. I felt like the energy was bursting out of me. Then there was a loud noise, and I was up above the bed. I glimpsed my physical body out of the corner of my sight. As I was getting closer to the window, I remember thinking: 'I can just go through it without opening it.' It was neat! I was smiling, and happy, and now I'm outside the window, looking at the parking lot and buildings. I was just basically flying around. Wow! I was going faster and faster, and higher and higher, took a right angle, and went straight up toward the stars. After a while, in the far distance, was this light. I went faster and faster toward it, and then things really started to pick up.

I had a life review. It seemed like I saw every instance I ever had with any person. I saw my interactions with them. If I had said something hurtful, I got to see it through their eyes, and feel what they felt. I was thinking later that maybe that's what judgment means, but it wasn't really judging me. It was just showing me how I could have been different. In other words, it was showing me how something wasn't loving. I could talk for hours about this. When it ended, I was still going closer and closer to the light.

As I was getting closer to the light, I was feeling so much love, more than I could ever imagine in my wildest imaginations. It was more than I felt for family or for my girlfriend. And I had full knowledge. Anything I wondered about, historical or science-wise, or physics questions - anything - I suddenly had the answer to. Every question I posed was answered instantly. Some questions seemed almost silly to ask, because it was so clear what the answer was.

When I first came out of the body, I had my arms and legs. But by the time I got really close to the light, there wasn't much left of my body. It was like I just had a face, my perception, and my eyes that were looking at the light, which I saw as a manifestation of God. It seemed like my job was to bring in all the love, completely, just inhale it in, and then give it back, like exhaling it back. You had to give it all back.

I was asked quite clearly if I wanted to die. Yes, that is what I wanted. But the requirement was that I had to give back all the love completely. What I found myself doing was keeping a little bit for me. Now, 25 years later, I've thought a lot about what held me back. It seems like you can't be the experiencer and the experience at the same time. To become one with God, to enter in, you have to let go of any separation. I still wanted to experience, and hang on to some of my experiences of life. The word 'attachment' came up. I still had attachments. So I consciously held back from giving back all the love. I veered off, went off to the left.

Now I was out of the light. As I veered off, all the warmth, and the all-knowing, and the total surrounding love was gone. Now I was not in the light. It was gray and colder. You could make out the shapes, like blurred images, of beings, spirits, just gray. They were not happy, not loving the light, not all-knowledgeable, but stuck. I felt like I was being sucked into that. I said: 'God, remember that thing about me wanting to die? I've changed my mind!' I remember the whole bargaining thing. 'I'll work on my attachments and on my ability to go all the way, so the next time I'm there I'll be able to make it!' Almost instantly I was back hovering over the bed and it was a very quick return. This was funny. My head connected first, but I was feeling my legs dangling up in the air. I said: 'Ok, God, enough of the cosmic jokes!' And then I was back in."

The elation and joyousness, as described by Bucke, may result when one knows that he or she is unconditionally loved despite their human faults. This may most certainly propel one toward cosmic consciousness. Sheila H. had serious trouble from the third month of pregnancy, when she developed toxemia. She went against medical advice and flew to California to be with her husband, who was stationed there in the Navy. When she went into premature but slow labor, she developed all of the possible serious complications, and so was taken to the operating room for a C-Section. Three days later the sutures were removed and she was being prepared for discharge home. While she was straining, the whole large incision burst open and she began hemorrhaging, which led to severe hypotension (low blood pressure) and ultimately a full cardiac and respiratory arrest. She was clinically dead. She said:

"The next thing I remember, I was looking at my body on the table, and at all this pandemonium that was going on. I had such a dispassionate feeling about that body while I was watching the back of the anesthesiologist's head, and his black, wavy hair, and then watching everyone running around getting the things the surgeon was calling for out of the cabinets in the OR.

Then it seemed I was in a white cloud-like funnel, wider at the top. It was going around, and I was moving. The view changed to big picture windows,

going past me in the funnel. As I went past each one, I was gradually seeing less and less of the OR and more and more of the funnel. Now we get to the hard part.

Then I was somewhere else. We don't have anything on earth like it. I felt like I had come from a very small, limited, finite place into an infinite place. I felt like I had infinite perception. I could see anything I wanted to. I could know anything I wanted to. I could look at anything in that world, but two things stood out, and I watched them through the whole process without even turning around. I could see what was going on in the OR and I could see what was going on in the nursery, where my daughter was. I'd never been to the nursery. My daughter was being held by a grand-motherly-looking woman, who was plump, in one of those over-sized dark wood rocking chairs.

Then there was a light in front of me, and I knew who it was before it ever got to me. It was a white, cloud-like, very bright, bright, bright light. As God got closer to me, I felt the most amazing thing, that I've never felt on earth. I was just bathed in this warmth and love. I felt like a frog that was lying on the dissecting table, slit open, so you can see every tiny part of it. God didn't love me because of my imperfections, or even in spite of them. There was just this unbelievable unconditional love. It was joyous!

We communicated with each other, not with words, but with thoughts. I felt washed over in this incredible love. He could see every nice, benevolent streak I had, and He was also fully aware of every rotten, vindictive streak that I had. It was ok! He just loved me! I was aware that my whole being, my thought processes, my perception, my everything, was laid open for Him to see. He knew everything, anyway, but I still put forth thoughts, because in my ignorance I didn't know what else to do.

You think if you're going to have a conversation with God, that you're going to say something profound. It ain't necessarily so! This is a little embarrassing. I said to Him: 'I have to go back'. He said to me: 'If you go back, you'll only come back here again.' Without turning around, I was able to look at my daughter in the nursery, and He was aware of me looking. I said: 'I have a new baby. I can't leave her.' Then He just washed over me with a smile. Now how does a faceless person smile? I can't tell you, but I knew it was a smile, and then I was suddenly back in my body.

I was raised a Southern Baptist. We were told as children, that God loves us, but that we should be fearful of Him and not cross Him. He was someone to be afraid of, like a harsh parent. But the God I met was not that kind of person. I used to think that Christianity was the only way, and that if you weren't born again then you're going to hell. Well, the God I saw would not burn anybody. He has been wrongly accused, and He's probably pissed off!

And I came away with the feeling that sometimes God is just as upset over things that happen as we are. It's not that He doesn't have the ability to control everything. It's just like we, as parents, have the ability to control everything, and lock our children in their bedrooms and never let them experience anything.

We have that power. I think we're upset when bad things happen to our kids. God doesn't inflict children with AIDS, and do bad things. He's just as upset as we are when bad things happen. He's been given a bad rap, bless His heart!"

The last characteristic of cosmic consciousness, according to Dr. Bucke, is consciousness of eternal life - and consciousness that one already has it. Maya, unfortunately, like many others, was severely traumatized during her childhood. As a self-protective mechanism, she automatically separated from her physical body. She went to other realms, escorted by light beings, and was taught many higher truths. She said:

"Please make it understood that although mine wasn't an after-death experience, it was the same thing. My catalyst came because I was being abused as a child, and I left my body. I had past life memory at 6 years old. I had full recall of living in Atlantis. I had no one to talk to about this. Later on my father, who was deceased, would come to me and, in astral dreams, would give me direct teaching about what I needed to know.

It's important to show that there are different catalysts to these experiences. It's not just about death. It's another experience of life that we call death. It's like a continuation. It's like Einstein's theory of matter: $E=MC^2$. Solid can turn to gas, can turn to liquid. That's what we are. We're physical, can turn to light, can turn to energy, can turn to vapors. We've coined this term 'death'. Most of us have been indoctrinated and brainwashed into thinking there is death, and we're fearful of it. Then one day we start saying: 'I have to have a disease to die now.' Actually, I don't think we have to die from disease. It isn't necessary. I think we create that. And there's just so much that we don't realize, because we've had such a limited peephole into this universe. I think this is part of why I'm here.

I definitely know there is reincarnation. But the truth is that we are immortal beings, and we can change form whenever we want to, but because we were so indoctrinated, we had our basic spiritual wisdom taken from us. We were made to feel that only the great teachers, priests, and rabbis were allowed to have this information. The masses were controlled through fear, through doctrine, and through codes of ethics. So we developed these ways of continuing to live. So we created death and reincarnation. Think about it. What else could we do if we didn't think we were immortal? And the truth is, we are immortal! But we had to create death, reincarnation and illness. It's an illusion. It's not real. And this knowledge of immortality came to me from my out of body experiences.

I have a degree in psychology. I am a psycho-spiritual therapist, trained in multiple spiritual techniques. I have been able to help a lot of abused people in the last 20 years. I help them come into the spiritual light to heal. That's part of my purpose here."

Many of the near-death experiencers, and experiencers of the other spiritually transforming events expand their consciousness because of those events. We who vicariously experience them do as well. We are, indeed, interconnected to each other and to the highest energy source. What happens to you, ultimately, happens

to us all. I, therefore, agree with Dr. Burke that “our descendants will sooner or later reach, as a race, the condition of cosmic consciousness, just as, long ago, our ancestors passed from simple to self consciousness (Bucke 1901, 3)”.

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EVIDENCE FROM BEYOND

Grace Robson Crowley, D.Min.

Dr. Crowley shares information about her own life, how she became interested in mediumship, her deceased husband, John C. Crowley, a former Academy Board member, and plays a tape recording of a deep trance reading with the medium, F. Reed Brown, in which her husband speaks about his transition into spirit and being led through a channel of light by an Indian guide to a meeting with friends and family whom he mentions by name. He also says that the work the Academy is doing and the dissemination of the ensuing knowledge is very important for our life in eternity.

Evidence from beyond is actually with us all the time. Spirit is aware and we can be aware of spirit. Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship was founded in Chicago in 1957 in order to bring through the assets and the reality of spirit through mediumship into the awareness and consciousness of the Christian church.

My father was a minister in the Congregational Church and a missionary in China where I lived for the first few years of my life. My first language was Chinese. I remember very clearly that when I was three or four years old I had a beginning experience of the reality of spirit. We were in Nanking, China; Pearl Buck was our next door neighbor; and I was within the compound walls. I remember looking up into the sky and saying, "Thank you, God, for this life." That has always stayed with me - the awareness that I must have lived before or I couldn't have said this.

We left China when I was four and a half years old. We had to escape on gunboats when Chiang Kai-shek came into Nanking. Husufu, one of our servants, saved my father's life and was instrumental in my awareness of continuing life and the reality of spirit. Years later while I was studying for my doctorate at Columbia University in New York, I met Jack Crowley, who I later married. He introduced me to May Benzenberg Mayer who had studied with Dr. Carl Jung. She had established a school of applied philosophy in New York City where she held seances. Having been a New England minister's daughter, I had no idea what a seance was, but attended my first seance there, became a member of the her school and learned so much about continuing life, reincarnation, and all those things which made sense to me. Husufu came through in a trumpet seance, described our life in China and, speaking Chinese, addressed me through a medium. (When the trumpet came to me, it hit me on the head and I screamed.) I said that I didn't understand Chinese any longer and that he'd have to speak in English. He did and described our home in Massachusetts, a conversation I'd had with my father, and described my father and my grandmother who lived in the house. Several weeks before this seance, while I was visiting my parents, my father said to me, "I wonder what happened to Husufu? I wrote two letters to him. The first he answered, the second he never answered." When Husufu came through in this seance, he said, "I received two

letters from your father. I answered the first, but couldn't answer the second because my family and I were killed by the Japanese." That was the invasion of Nanking. That experience with Husufu literally turned my life around. I was a theological student at Union Theological Seminary at that point, working on my doctorate in religion. To me, eternal life was just a matter of faith. But now I knew it wasn't a matter of faith; it was a matter of knowledge. That is the mission of the Academy - to take this knowledge that we have and bring it to those in the established churches and those who have conventional, accepted beliefs, but want to know more.

Jack, my husband, became interested in the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship and founded a chapter in Rochester, New York. Under his leadership, it became a very vibrant group with about 200 members. Both SFF and the Academy were very important organizations to Jack. This physical life is only one stage of the totality of existence. Reincarnation was a reality to me from my earliest years. It's the only thing that makes sense; we're given more than one chance and that's the only way we can grow into an understanding of God and spirit.

I've preached long enough. This group has an understanding of the importance of mediumship, but we know that mediums of quality are essential. By that, I mean that they need to be intelligent, reasonably well educated, and have integrity. A weakness of the Spiritualist church is that many of their mediums are not well educated. Messages received from spirit have said that the medium is the instrument and that those in spirit cannot come through inferior instruments. The medium has to be able to comprehend the thoughts that those in spirit try to project through the medium. If the medium doesn't have the mental or emotional sensitivity to understand the thoughts projected by spirit, the medium will not be effective.

F. Reed Brown is a deep trance medium who Jack and I knew for years and respected. He has a masters degree and a metaphysical church in Arlington, Virginia. After Jack passed on several years ago, I wanted very much to hear from him. I went to Roanoke, Virginia where Reed has a center that operates mostly in the summer of each year and got a reading from him in which Jack came through. This is the tape recording of that reading which I think is meaningful:

R. Brown: Spirit is going to try to entrance me because I can feel the energy here, so say the Lord's Prayer or do some Oms or do something because I can feel it...

G. Crowley: Our father, who art in Heaven, halloed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven, give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

G. Crowley: It takes time to go into trance.

Dr. Bebos: This is Dr. Bebos. Can you hear me?

G. Crowley: Yes, I can.

Dr. Bebos: Now if you can do some Oms or something, we'll be able to gain full control of the medium.

G. Crowley: All right. Ommmm Ommm Ommm Ommm [Singing - Our father, who art in Heaven, halloed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven, give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into...]

Matthew: Matthew here. Blessings and greetings to you. As we come now, we open the doorway between the two worlds to allow your beloved one to come and to allow you to know exactly what has taken place, when he passed from this world into the next and what he is now doing. You understand?

G. Crowley: Yes.

Matthew: Now, just a moment, beloved one, peace.....

G. Crowley: Jack?

J. Crowley: Jack. Can you hear me?

G. Crowley: Yes.

J. Crowley: Finally. I know you're doing all right. I just want you to do what you want to do. Do you understand?

G. Crowley: What I want to do?

J. Crowley: Yes. Just don't make any changes unless you want to.

G. Crowley: All right.

J. Crowley: And I'll be there with you in helping with these things. I just wanted you to know a lot of things that were happening. You know, I'm just so grateful for all the teachers and Big Horse was right there when I came over.

G. Crowley: Oh, wonderful! Wonderful.

J. Crowley: And you remember Arline?

G. Crowley: Oh, my, yes!

J. Crowley: Well, she was there too.

G. Crowley: Arline Libertson?

J. Crowley: Yes. And she was laughing; she wanted to continue to give me healing. You understand?

G. Crowley: Oh I remember when we gave her healing toward the end of her life.

J. Crowley: She wanted to reverse it now.

G. Crowley: Oh, how wonderful!

J. Crowley: I just wanted you to know that she was there too and she said she was just so grateful for everything we did for her.

G. Crowley: Oh, isn't that wonderful!

J. Crowley: We're going to be right there.

G. Crowley: And that was true with mother, too. Our prayers meant a lot to her.

J. Crowley: Yes, exactly. Of course, the minute I came over here and of course, Gertrude was right here also. They were all just so happy. Because you know, I just...old Thomas Francis Junior was here too.

G. Crowley: Oh, I know. Yes, and Jack, your mother...

J. Crowley: Yes, I was so glad to see her! You know, we can talk about it all we want, but it was indeed a wonderful thing to see her. You know, everything that we read was basically true, but I've found that not everyone sees the light. You know, there are a lot of things written, but I think it's an individual experience.

G. Crowley: The transition.

J. Crowley: Yes, and some of these folks who come over here see that light and others don't see it.

G. Crowley: Yes, and others don't. Some of them have a dark passage, isn't that true?

J. Crowley: Yes.

G. Crowley: Yes, or pass through that light.

J. Crowley: Yes, however, when I came through here, it was like a tunnel and I was walking through that and I could hear, "Come on, come on" and Big Horse was the one

saying, "Come, come, this way, this way", and I kept following that voice and then, all of a sudden, I began to see the light and make out figures. And then I saw my mother and father coming to me and that was good news. Well, you know, I'm just so grateful for all the guidance that all the teachers and, you know, One Star was there also.

G. Crowley: Oh, One Star! One Star!

J. Crowley: Yes. It just amazes me. And, you know, Aunt Margaret was there.

G. Crowley: Your Aunt Margaret?

J. Crowley: And she was so glad because she did so much and she asked me about, you know, the gold watch.

G. Crowley: Ah hah... I remember that...Now, Jack, what about my brother, Horace. Have you seen him?

J. Crowley: Yes. He's all right.

G. Crowley: He's all right?

J. Crowley: Yes. He's in the light.

G. Crowley: Oh, wonderful!

J. Crowley: Just know that he's going to be O.K. Snow on the Mountain is helping him.

G. Crowley: Oh, yes!

J. Crowley: Big Elephant is also trying to help him.

G. Crowley: Big Elephant, Snow on the Mountain and my Indian and of course One Star.

J. Crowley: Yes, and they all want you to know they're going to be right there.

G. Crowley: And what about Tall Pine? He's yours, isn't he?

J. Crowley: Yes he is. And you know who I met, Grace?

G. Crowley: Who?

J. Crowley: Albert Schweitzer.

G. Crowley: Oh! My hero, my hero.

J. Crowley: Yes, and I thought I'd tell you that.

G. Crowley: I've loved him ever since I was a little girl.

J. Crowley: Well, I've been trying to bring him to you and, you know, he's a very beautiful soul. Everything that we've read about him is true.

G. Crowley: I read *Out of My Life and Thought* when I was just a little girl.

J. Crowley: He's a wonderful soul and he's continuing his great work and he's also a great organist and he's playing just so beautifully. He's talking about obtaining the - yes, I know that - the music that he did with Bach on some of the old organs and he's playing. He thought you might enjoy that.

G. Crowley: Oh, that's wonderful!

J. Crowley: And I'm sure if you look around a little you'll be able to find them.

G. Crowley: And of course our friend Ellen from Switzerland, she's an organist. Remember?

J. Crowley: Yes, of course.

G. Crowley: Now, what about Paul Jolles? Have you had any contact with him? He's now in spirit.

J. Crowley: Yes, just briefly and greetings, but he's busy getting his own thing together, you know.

G. Crowley: Oh, my, yes, that was such a sudden tragedy.

J. Crowley: But we'll be in contact, I'm sure, as soon as he's ready because I've adjusted and...

G. Crowley: Yes...Jack, what do you have to say to me about things that you would like to have done? I'm thinking about the book. As you know, this grief process is very consuming.

J. Crowley: Yes, Yes. And it'll take a little while and you and I know we were still good friends, weren't we?

G. Crowley: That's right. We always were.

J. Crowley: Yes. And you know, we were very lucky.

G. Crowley: We certainly were - from the very beginning.

J. Crowley: God blessed us.

G. Crowley: Yes - four wonderful kids.

J. Crowley: Don't worry about any of them.

G. Crowley: No, I think they're doing all right. I'm concerned sometimes about John.

J. Crowley: Well, I know, but...

G. Crowley: Beautiful souls. He has to find his way.

J. Crowley: Yes, he's got his own way and he's trying to be intellectual. Well, that's good. I'm proud of them and I love them all.

G. Crowley: I know. Do you want me to continue with the book?

J. Crowley: Yes.

G. Crowley: All right, when I'm ready.

J. Crowley: When you're ready.

G. Crowley: I know it's really finished; it just needs editing.

J. Crowley: Yes, and I'll help you with that and I'll also try to get the right people to help you.

G. Crowley: And you know, Jack, I've continued with the group because I knew that it meant so much to you.

J. Crowley: Well now's a chance that I can work from this side and do some of the things that we talked about. I met Warren Smith over here and Firefly. He's going to help us with the group and Firefly said she'd help also.

G. Crowley: That's good because they tend to be too dependent, too dependent, rather than doing their own thing, and of course you know that that's what we had to face.

J. Crowley: Yes, I know. Well, I'm going to be there and see what I can do, but Warren said he'd help with some of the phenomena.

G. Crowley: Oh, that would be great! And John is anxious to do that, you know, to do mediumship with the group.

J. Crowley: Yes, and I think, you know, as things are working through him there's a lot of ectoplasm you'll begin to see around the room. Also, keep notes, a little diary and date it. You'll be able to go through that as you document yourself and see the progress that is being made and also it will keep a consistent record and an accurate one of when things really happened, because otherwise, one tends to forget when things happened and how, so you just need to make sure that no one embellishes anything, because after these things happen, why...the embellishments ruin it.

G. Crowley: Yes...That's the beauty of your book, Jack, I think it's very honest.

J. Crowley: Yes, well I tried and I just wish more folks at the frontiers could understand what I understood.

G. Crowley: The Academy you're thinking about too, and you know the Academy, as you've noticed, talks about these things, but they don't experience them in terms of what we have right here.

J. Crowley: Yes, that's unfortunate. Too many people write about things they know nothing about.

G. Crowley: Exactly! They haven't even been to a seance or circles or anything.

J. Crowley: Exactly and they're experts. Then if you read some of the meanderings then you can understand that they've never been there.

G. Crowley: That's correct.

J. Crowley: Well, I'm going to help on that, but I never took a backseat to that, either.

G. Crowley: No, you certainly didn't!

J. Crowley: Materialization and physical phenomena and I was criticized for that and knew what they said and I really don't care because it's what I experienced and that's part of the scientific mind.

G. Crowley: And you know then it was true and you know now that it's true.

J. Crowley: More now than ever.

G. Crowley: More now than ever.

J. Crowley: You know, I think we have a belief system, however, it takes experience to turn your belief system into a knowledge and I can truly say to you that I had a knowledge when I was on earth and even more so now - not just a belief. Unfortunately, a lot of our comrades thought that it was just a belief.

G. Crowley: Oh, I see. I think that's a very important distinction.

J. Crowley: And I think that if you're going to approach this from a scientific viewpoint, you've got to have the experience. You've got to be able to go into that room and explore the possibilities and probabilities and hear and then do your research and draw your conclusions.

G. Crowley: Yes, and of course, this is what Carl Jung said, that we cannot know until we experience.

J. Crowley: That is exactly right. He'll be coming around you from time to time also.

G. Crowley: Oh, well that's good, because they want me to take leadership in this Academy and I know it's not an easy thing and I know you know.

J. Crowley: I know exactly what you'll be dealing with and I will be helping you and again, you're going to have to stand pat on what you know to be true and some of the others will be ridiculing you just as they ridiculed me, but that's their prerogative. However, it's also your prerogative to believe as you wish to, based on what you've seen. You know, all of the years that we investigated and went through things with so many different mediums and psychics and so on, I can say that you and I have seen it all.

G. Crowley: I think so. We've been very blessed that way. We had that opportunity and I thank M.B.M. for having started us on that path years ago.

J. Crowley: She is trying to open new doors all the time and you know her energies now are part of a universal consciousness coming to earth.

G. Crowley: Is that right?

J. Crowley: Yes. And you're going to see more and more people awakening now to spiritual truths than ever before.

G. Crowley: Well, I'm glad! I think the big challenge is going to be to the Christian Church.

J. Crowley: Yes. Well, it's got to change or it's going to die!

G. Crowley: Absolutely! It has to change. My dad, Father Robson, came through once and said, "I've changed my mind about a lot of things".

J. Crowley: Well, you know, it's interesting, because I'm also preparing now, to be at a wonderful meeting of all the ascended ones and I am told that Jesus will also be there. I have been privileged to see his face and the light and I want you to know he did exist. You understand?

G. Crowley: Yes.

J. Crowley: Because there are so many that are going to say it was all a story that was made up.

G. Crowley: No, no, no! He did and I know that. And you know, several mediums have said that I knew him in his lifetime.

J. Crowley: Yes, you were there and when I have that meeting, but I've got to work on myself a little bit, and when I finally do have that meeting, I'll let you know about it.

G. Crowley: Oh, that's wonderful!

J. Crowley: And you're going to wake up feeling this tremendous joy and wonderful energy and that's when I've had the meeting. You will know.

G. Crowley: Jack, when I do this inspired writing which sometimes I do, usually after lunch or around one o'clock when I feel the presence, am I getting it right?

J. Crowley: Yes, I would say seventy-five per cent of it.

G. Crowley: That's what I wondered, because I know it isn't all quite right.

J. Crowley: No, and I think that until you become actually a physical phenomena medium or a direct voice or direct clairaudience voice, that most of these people from what I've observed have about a forty per cent accuracy and you're seventy-five, so you're way above average with that. But I also think that's because of the experience you've had, but I'll be there working with you and helping you and doing all that I can and you feel me many times. I hear you.

G. Crowley: Oh, yes. And you come in around five o'clock when it's time to fix the vegetables or the salad which you used to like to do.

J. Crowley: Yes, I'm always there. You will know that I'm be right there with you and we're still together.

G. Crowley: That's wonderful.

J. Crowley: I'm making progress; don't worry, you're not holding me back and I just want you to know that I'm sending a lot of love, I'm making progress, and the more I learn the more I'll share with you.

G. Crowley: Oh, that's wonderful!

J. Crowley: You know, I just want to say thank you so much for putting up with me all those years and it was truly wonderful.

G. Crowley: And I want to thank you for all the knowledge and truth and love that you opened up to me.

J. Crowley: Bless your heart. There was just so much that you never reacted to. Do you remember that unless we had - I can't remember any more which one did it - all the stuff all over the furniture, I can't remember if it was paint or...do you remember that - self expression?

G. Crowley: That was Elizabeth; she dumped food coloring all over the furniture because she thought it would be prettier that way.

J. Crowley: Yes, bless her heart. You know, I just wanted to remind you of that. How wonderful you were not to faint dead away. But we worked together cleaning that up and everything else. You were so understanding and I just wanted you to know that I was going to be close. I see you sometimes when you sleep. We're together; we talk. It's in other levels of your consciousness.

G. Crowley: I'm not aware; sometimes I do have a vision or something.

J. Crowley: Yes, and I'll be working with you on that to try to get it into the conscious mind.

G. Crowley: Oh, that's good.

J. Crowley: Yes, well, I love you. You be happy and make your own decisions. Don't be forced into anything. Anything you don't want to do, don't. You understand?

G. Crowley: O.K.

J. Crowley: And I'll be close to you. You just do with things what you want to do. They're yours now, and I don't care. I'll be close to you. God bless.

G. Crowley: I want to ask one question, Doctor Larson if he's still here or Matthew and that is why, off and on, during my adult life, I have been called "Ruth", usually by men, although there is one woman who has done this too.

Dr. Larson: Doctor Larson.

G. Crowley: Yes.

Dr. Larson: Because of the tremendous energies that you have and of course the story of Ruth, you understand?

G. Crowley: Yes.

Dr. Larson: And Boaz and so on. But you contain those energies. You understand?

G. Crowley: Yes.

Dr. Larson: You carry with you the Ruth energy. You remember the story of Ruth and Naomi.

G. Crowley: Yes, her loyalty.

Dr. Larson: Yes, and it is the same. Whither thou goest, I will go. Thy people shall be my people. You understand?

G. Crowley: Yes.

Dr. Larson: That energy has always come forth from you. You have been able to give that energy to so many people and it has helped them. You also had a past incarnation with the name of Ruth, but it was not the Ruth and Naomi. But there are several reasons why they tune in to that, not only because your name was Ruth at that time, but also because you carry that energy.

G. Crowley: Was I a nurse at that time?

Dr. Larson: Yes you were.

G. Crowley: That's what I wondered.

Dr. Larson: You see, the care giving field - the humanity, the love - has always been a part of you through many incarnations.

G. Crowley: That's interesting, because I always enjoyed hospital work.

Dr. Larson: Yes, and it will continue to be there. God bless you, my child.

G. Crowley: Thank you. Thank you.

Big Elk: Big Elk want to come. You hear old Big Elk? Because I want to come too before they close door. Let you know I am there to help you, make you strong. I be with you, keep you safe on big bird. You're not worried.

G. Crowley: I feel that energy when I'm taking off and sometimes I can see this beautiful light, usually a violet light.

Big Elk: We want to know you're safe and you'll be fine.

G. Crowley: I feel that energy of caring, knowing that you're there.

Big Elk: Brings peace.

G. Crowley: Yes.

Big Elk: Now, one called Blue Bell come and I must go now. It's been good to meet this way and you be at peace now.

G. Crowley: Thank you, Big Elk.

Blue Bell: It's Blue Bell. Well, bless your heart. We just wanted to say hello to you and let you know you know how close Jack is to you, so just be happy and just go right on with your work and you're going to be fine. It's so good to have you here.

G. Crowley: I love it here. Thank you for all that you do, Blue Bell. You're wonderful.

Blue Bell: Bless your heart. And we'll be NBCing you. And never good-bye, just so long for now. And do a little prayer and do some Oms - he's coming back. So long.

G. Crowley: All right. Father, we thank thee for all the gifts of light and love and for people through whom this light and love shines. This is the way of the Christ and this is the way of life. Thank you for making it possible. Amen.

R. Brown: Are you all right?

G. Crowley: Yes.

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COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS AS SEEN IN
THE IMAGES OF JESUS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Louis Richard Batzler

The term cosmic consciousness covers a variety of concepts, conditions, activities and personalities. It can refer to states of mind, attitudes, practices, and can include the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, theology and parapsychology. Cosmic consciousness is not a new nor recent phenomenon, but one that goes far back in the history of humanity.

This paper affirms that Jesus Christ is a prime example of one who manifested cosmic consciousness. This affirmation is based on the many images and descriptions which are recorded in the New Testament. No single image or description is dominant. It is the accumulation of these that depict a consciousness which is, in the best sense, cosmic.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' birth, death and resurrection have influenced human history in immeasurable ways. Jesus introduced into humanity a power, quality and significance which are difficult to conceive or put into words. By his life and teachings, Jesus brought into the world a consciousness of the nature of humankind and human behavior that revolutionized and set in motion a course of history as yet unequalled. Millions of persons have ordered their lives in his name. Untold numbers of people have died violently because of their ardent belief or disbelief in him. Jesus has influenced civilizations and cultures throughout the world. In his name churches, monasteries, religious organizations have been founded, wars fought, cathedrals, hospitals and schools erected, and great art, music and literature produced. Over the centuries, beliefs and behaviors centered in Jesus have varied in expression and intensity. Despite the vicissitudes and conflicts within and outside of Christianity, the community of faith based on Jesus Christ persists throughout the world today.

There are many reasons for the impact that Jesus has had on human history. These include the yearning of persons for a savior, the search and desire for life beyond death, the works and writings of Paul recorded in the New Testament, the Gospel accounts of Jesus' thoughts, words and deeds, and the endless proliferation and distribution of these Scriptures along with missionary evangelism around the world. Christian martyrdom and martyrology, Christ-related political and social dynamics during and since his life on earth, the development of ecclesiastical power and control, ceaseless theological dialogs, doctrines and dogmas concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and paranormal phenomena (e.g., voices, visions) concerning Jesus, especially in the lives of saints,

mystics and psychics, have all played a part in the influence of Jesus on history.

The purpose of this paper is to examine relevant New Testament writings that deal with Jesus' nature and accomplishments in order to see how these relate to and reveal cosmic consciousness. My conclusion is that, in addition to the aforementioned dynamics about Jesus' importance, his cosmic consciousness (or Christ-consciousness) is an integral and significant factor in the power, persistence and pervasiveness of Christianity.

At this point, a few words are in order concerning the New Testament scriptures. Although interpretation of scriptures always remains indeterminate because of the many diverse factors involved such as culture, context, language, exegetical differences, archeological discoveries and studies, theological postures, categorical and dogmatic statements, a priori assumptions, mistranslations, etc. most biblical scholars affirm the basic integrity of the New Testament which is a corpus of thought that calls believers to commitment to Jesus and to service in his name. The assumption is that the New Testament is an intentional record of early Christian thought and tradition about Jesus. Within the texts is the meaning of what Jesus said and did, though not the most accurate record. The memories are transcriptions of oral traditions which were written because they nourished and inspired individuals and communities. Although the recorded memories of Jesus are incomplete, sometimes contradictory, and, one might even say ephemeral, the information about his life must not be jeopardized by overly aggressive biblical criticism. The written word cannot imprison the spirit. The spiritual life cannot be restricted by permanent retrospection. Words need not have a final binding meaning. Spirit cannot be isolated and subject to tests and measurements. Texts point beyond the limits we set upon them. Faith, reason and imagination are requisites for responsible scriptural interpretation. Who Jesus was and what Jesus was about must remain perennially open.

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Throughout the ages persons have sought to understand, describe and define consciousness. The results have been a bewildering array of ideas and experiences that have been recorded in psychiatric and psychological analysis and studies, esoteric disciplines, biological and neurophysiological sciences, paranormal research and in theological and philosophical theories and treatises.

Among the many types and expressions of consciousness is cosmic consciousness, which is our present concern. Basically, my understanding of cosmic consciousness is that it is an unique, exalted and transforming experience and state of reality that has evolved in the human mind and spirit over millenia and is a significant aspect of the human situation, especially in our time. Although it is important to investigate, define, describe and understand cosmic consciousness, I believe that it is equally, or even more, important to seek to manifest cosmic consciousness in our own lives. In the world where persons are struggling with ravaging diseases, poverty and hunger, civil and religious warfare, harmful addictions of many kinds, proliferation of weapons, numerous ecological problems, corruption at all levels of society, hate groups and terrorism, genocide, population explosion and the moral and ethical problems of abortion, euthanasia and genetic engineering,

we need to be personally involved in the transformation to higher states of consciousness. The world needs more love and compassion and less hatred and strife - and the intellectual world needs this just as much. We should not hurry to define cosmic consciousness, but honestly try to experience it.

In his book, The Highest State of Consciousness, John White notes the various terms and dynamics associated with cosmic consciousness. He mentions the following: St. Paul-peace that passeth understanding; Zen Buddhism-satori or kensho; R.M. Bucke-cosmic consciousness; Yoga-samadhi or moksha; Taoism-the absolute Tao; T. Merton-transcendental unconsciousness; A. Maslow-peak experience; Sufis-fana; Gurdjieff-objective consciousness; Quakers-the inner light; Jung-individuation; and M. Ruber-I-Thou relationship. All affirm the higher consciousness as a state of awareness radically different from our ordinary understanding, our normal waking consciousness, our everyday mind. All agree that this highest state is a self-transforming perception of one's total union with the infinite, beyond time and space, an unlimited unity with all creation, and a transcendence of the ego. (White 1972,vii).

One of the more significant works on cosmic consciousness is Richard Bucke's book, Cosmic Consciousness. - a classic investigation of the development of man's mystic relation to the infinite. At the outset, Bucke notes that cosmic consciousness is a higher form of consciousness than that possessed by the ordinary person. The prime characteristic is a consciousness of the life and order of the universe (cosmos). This is accompanied by intellectual enlightenment, moral exaltation, indescribable feeling of elevation, emotion, joy, sense of immortality and consciousness of eternal life. Later Bucke adds to these marks of cosmic sense the subjective light, loss of fear of death, loss of sense of sin, suddenness of awakening, added charm to the personality so that men and women are always strongly attracted to the person, and transfiguration of the subject of the change as seen by others when the cosmic sense is actually present (Bucke 1969,1-3, 74).

There are other views of cosmic consciousness that coincide with Bucke's. They either expand on Bucke's ideas or add other aspects. Some of these views note that one having cosmic consciousness perceives the entire universe as an integrated and unified whole.- an interaction, interrelation and interdependence of all that exists. There is a great concentration and focus on the sanctity of life. Attitudes are relatively ego-transcending, self-forgetful and unselfish, more object-centered than ego-centered. The experience often results in a disorientation of time and space. There is deep compassion and emphasis on the intrinsic value of Being. Wonder, awe, reverence, humility and surrender prevail in one's thinking, feeling and acting. Dichotomies, polarities and conflicts tend to be transcended or resolved. There is a tendency toward loss of fear and anxiety, especially regarding death; inhibition of defense and control, and absence of perplexity, confusion and conflict. One moves more closely to perfect identity to knowing one's true self. One becomes more responsible, creative self-determining, more accepting, thereby more spontaneous and honest; and less striving, less needing, less wanting, less wishing and asks less of oneself. There is a sense of gratitude, reflected in worship and service. The person experiencing and maintaining cosmic consciousness becomes a new being (White 1969, Maslow 1968, Keyes 1975, Capra 1996, Ferrucci 1982, Wright 1978).

NEW TESTAMENT IMAGES OF JESUS

The dictionary definition of image is a mental picture of something, a conception, idea or impression; a vivid representation, a graphic description; a figure of speech, especially a metaphor or simile. Cirlot describes image as a pattern of forms and figures endowed with unity and significance and notes that some believe the image to be the highest form that knowing can assume, for all knowledge tends toward a visual synthesis. The language of images is based upon a precise and crystallized means of expression, revealing transcendent truths, external to man (cosmic order) as well as within him (thought, moral order of things, psychic evolution, the destiny of the soul). Furthermore, an image possesses a quality which increases its dynamism and gives it a truly dramatic character (Cirlot 1978, 156,xxi).

There are numerous images of Jesus within and outside of Christianity. Most of these appear in the canonical New Testament. No single image is dominant, although some individuals would make it so. It is the multiplicity and variety of these New Testament images of Jesus that provide a picture of Jesus which corresponds to the descriptions of cosmic consciousness previously cited.

The Scriptures and the Christian Church have, from the start, considered Jesus both human and divine - this despite the views of Gnostics and other so-called heresies which deny the both-and belief. It is this human-divine image of Jesus that makes his cosmic consciousness rather unique.

Jesus' humanity is seen in the birth narratives and in the full range of emotions and physical states - hunger, anger, love, weeping, compassion, weariness, thirst, sorrow, physical pain. There are numerous images which depict Jesus as a true friend and provider of persons' needs. His very nature is associated with blessing, nourishing, compassion and emphasis on the value of being. Jesus comes as one anointed by the spirit of the Lord to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Lk 4:16-19). The Gospels present a veritable collage of Jesus as the miraculous provider - e.g., feeding of the 5000 (Mt 14:13-21), raising Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44), and numerous healings (Mt 8:1-17, 9:18-34). His healings include exorcisms (Mt 8:28-34), healing leprosy (Lk 5:12-16), restoring sight (Mt 9:27-30), stopping hemorrhaging (Mk 5:25-34).

The images of caring are expanded in metaphors regarding Jesus' identity. These are seen in the "I am" statements of Jesus: the bread of life (fulfillment-Jn 6:35); the light of the world (illumination-Jn 8:12); good shepherd (sacrifice-Jn 10:11); resurrection and the life (creativity-Jn 11:25); the way, truth and life (truth-Jn 14:6); true vine (connectedness-Jn 15:1). All of these are, in some way, affirmations that express a cosmic consciousness.

There are several other images of Jesus that point to his cosmic consciousness. Jesus is pictured as a well-known prophet who proclaims with authority the arrival of the Kingdom of God, even indicating that the Kingdom is present in his own person (Lk 4:43). The Kingdom of God is a major motif in the Gospels, appearing 204

times. The many and various descriptions of the Kingdom parallel some of those describing cosmic consciousness. In fact, the Kingdom of God might be used as a synonym for cosmic consciousness. The Kingdom has no racial barriers, no creed and no gender or social status requirements. The Kingdom is creativity and growth, a transformed consciousness, self-discovery, new being and realization of a far-reaching divine plan. It is a present personal reality within oneself. The Kingdom is an expression of spiritual power, a new standard of moral values and ethical conduct, and the preeminence of the spiritual compared to the material. The hallmark of Jesus' ministry, the message and enactment of the Kingdom of God, is a natural accompaniment to his status as the anointed. As anointed king (another image), Jesus has the authority to describe the nature of the Kingdom, to dispense its blessings and accept persons into the Kingdom (Sanford 1970, Ryken 1998, 448).

The image of Jesus as sage or wise man (intellectual enlightenment) is seen in numerous passages. His sayings, metaphors, parable aphorisms reveal a wide-ranging knowledge of Scripture, the world of nature and of human beings. As a teacher he exhibits clarity, power and authority, while displaying remarkable insights into his disciples, followers and people at large. This illumination is noted at Jesus' baptism when a voice from heaven says, "This is my son" (Mk 1:11). Later, the same words are spoken at his transfiguration (Mt 17:1-9). Both of these events have the suddenness that is one of the characteristics of the higher sense (Bucke 1969, 99).

Although the term savior appears only 24 times in the New Testament, in Christian parlance, savior is nearly synonymous with Jesus, and the word salvation is often used with Jesus as the subject. Salvation is a comprehensive image that embraces a number of benefits brought about by God's saving action in Jesus. The savior brings outward change with a corresponding inner transformation (Lk 19:9-10). Jesus, the sinless one, who does not fear death, humbles himself and yields to crucifixion so that through him other may be forgiven of their sins and not fear death (2 Cor 5:21). The imagery of sacrificing his life for the deliverance of others from death and bondage of sin (Rom 6, 8:1-2) is a profound one for describing cosmic consciousness. Bucke notes that those who have the cosmic sense give up everything for it (Bucke 1969, 105).

Various New Testament passages claim, or allude to, Jesus' divinity. These images have done much to account for the development and spread of Christianity. In the book of Revelation, the image of Jesus as the Alpha and Omega is an indication of the eternal nature of Jesus, his transcendence of time and space and his immortality - all signs of cosmic consciousness. Nothing lies outside of his sovereign vision, plan and power (Rev 1:8,17; 21:6; 22:13). In the prologue to John's Gospel, Jesus is identified with the Word, the Logos, that was with God, was God, was in the beginning with God, and was active in creation. Jesus is the Wisdom of God incarnate, the true light which enlightens everyone (Jn 1:1-11). Paul says that Jesus is the "image of the Invisible God, the first-born of all creation" (Col 1:15). In the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is described as the one through whom God created the worlds. Jesus is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being and he sustains all things by his powerful word. (Heb 1:2,3). The biblical image of Jesus as the Son of God also affirms his divinity. This image is seen in his baptism (Mk 1:11), his temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11) and in his

transfiguration (Mt 17:1-11). These are examples of moral exaltation. In I Cor 15:42-49, Paul speaks of Jesus as the man of heaven who by his resurrection became a life-giving spirit. Here the focus is not so much on protology, but on eschatology. Jesus as the image of God is the model of humanity, both originally in the first creation and eschatologically in the new creation (Ryken,447).

CONCLUSION

Richard Bucke, in his book, devotes fourteen pages to Jesus as one who demonstrated cosmic consciousness. Most of Bucke's comments are based on some of the words and deeds of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament. In summary, he lists the characteristics of cosmic consciousness which Jesus displayed. These include some evidence of the suddenness that belongs to the oncoming of the new sense; possibly some indication of subjective light; presumably intellectual illumination; moral elevation well marked; the sense of immortality and the extinction of the fear of death, and the sense of sin; and change of appearance which accompanies the cosmic sense and spoken of by the synoptics as Jesus' transfiguration (Bucke 1969, 110-11).

In my paper I have expanded on Bucke's interpretation by using major New Testament images of Jesus which indicate his cosmic consciousness. What the information shows is a person whose true selfhood is realized - whose identity is affirmed by knowing the source and force of his being. The images depict Jesus' unconditional surrender to the Divine will, a process of self-sacrifice in which he is transformed from efforts that serve the development of knowledge and experience in the planes of psychophysical personality to a direct effort toward self-transcendence. In this stage, Jesus' transcendental self is no longer pitted against the phenomenal world. Although he is in the world, he is beyond the world. He is free of apparent implications, limitations, and binding power of the phenomenal world. The mechanism of ego-bound attention is transcended. Jesus is free of stress, fear, conflict and doubt in the majestic splendor of bliss of the One Reality - God. It is this biblical witness that has inspired and sustained Christians through the centuries. Jesus is indeed a cosmic man who points for humankind the path to cosmic awareness and cosmic consciousness.

This cosmic consciousness, or Christ-consciousness, challenges each one of us (whether Christian or not) to seek, find and manifest this higher reality which is potentially within us all. I believe that our Academy has been helpful in moving us toward this goal. Cosmic consciousness is so much needed in our humanity, which for the most part, thinks and acts in the lower plane of self-consciousness.

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LEVELS OF AWARENESS

Ravindra Kumar, Ph.D.

Evidence of the permanent and non-material or spiritual element, called Soul or Atman, is presented. Soul cannot be seen through physical eyes. Properties through which Soul can be recognized are presented. It is shown that Soul goes out-of-the-body not only in dreams but also in waking states. However, mind and body being instruments through which Soul works, Soul never lets the mind know all the truth. Opinions of the researchers about the time of creation of Souls are presented. People on earth live on seven different levels of awareness, according to their stages of evolution. Through these symptoms anyone can find out one's position on the ladder of evolution.

1. Evidence and Motivation

For the last about two decades I have been having out-of-body or soul-travel experiences in various locations of the higher realms. I met several souls during these expeditions. This happened when my body was asleep. I was intrigued of talking to someone living on higher realms, while I am in the waking state. The opportunity came after **my father translated to heavens in September 1992**. I have a medium friend in North Carolina, who offered me the opportunity of **talking to my father** through him. The details run as follows.

In September 1995, that is three years after my father's demise, I had first contact with him. The medium set himself aside and someone spoke through him saying that Ganga Singh (my father) is not strong enough to talk directly with me. The speaker said that he was the caretaker of the place where my father was recovering, and that he can converse with me if I like. Whatever my father said the keeper repeated to me, while whatever I said my father could hear directly. My father said that he was getting a long rest after a long time and feeling very relaxed. His broken leg was under recovery and soon he will be transferred to the region of brighter light. He was in a place like a hospital where a large number of people were recovering. He wanted me to remove his articles from the house so that his attention is not distracted on his progressive way. He also requested to be emotionally released by all relatives. On being asked if he has met my grandmother (his mother), he said that she is in a higher region where he can see her but he cannot go there. He wanted me to tell his wife (my mother) that he is very well and that no body should worry about him. We talked some family matters of common interest. I then said to him that I was sorry not to be present when he left this world. He said he also missed meeting me and wanted to embrace me. He suggested that he could meet me in a dream thirty days later, if I agree. Naturally I agreed to it. Exactly thirty days later I was out of my body while asleep and both of us were walking and talking together on some plane for about forty-five minutes.

The second meeting I had with him was in June 2000, at the residence of my medium friend in North Carolina. This time my father was talking to me directly. He greeted me with folded hands, and I acted like touching his feet according to the Indian culture. He said that we were no more like father and son but as two fellow souls. He said that he knows that I am questing for knowledge and he will help me. He said he was proud of my progress and that I will still go a far

way. I asked if he remembered his wife, to which he questioned back, "which one?". There were other souls who had been his wives in other lifetimes. He told me that he was living as an existence, sometimes like a cloud in earthly language. However, he could take a form if he liked, but there was no need. He was not eating or drinking since there was no need and people there had no mouth as such. There were many beautiful colors, which he had not seen on earth. He said that the atmosphere was so lovely that he can not describe it rightly. He could go to meet friends or relatives if and when he wanted. Usually they would come to see him in-group at times. Several teachers keep coming from time to time and they learn from all of them. He said the teachers were bright and peaceful persons. On asking about his next incarnation, he said there is no thinking on that line at all. There is no time scale and he is happily learning and enjoying his living. There are things he said he could not describe in worldly language. He then wanted to go but told me to come and talk again whenever I wanted. On asking if I troubled him, he said, "no, not at all".

In another session I had a talk for about an hour with Guru Kripal. He told me that the plane he is living at is called "mental plane" on earth. He said people here have very subtle bodies, sometimes only a flash of light or a point. The people here are engaged in religious pursuits most of the time. Most of them are teachers and they keep going to places wherever help is required. I told him that I give two-hour workshop to people. He then asked me if I applied the same tough rules to myself or not.

After witnessing myself as a soul for several years and then talking to my father and Guru Kripal living on astral and mental planes, respectively, as souls or in subtle bodies, it was natural for me to look for the gradation of planes and consciousness. I have presented gradation of planes in detail in my book *Kingdom of Heaven and kundalini*. Here I am going to present the gradation of consciousness as found at the seven levels, while the individual is still living on earth. One can call them the **levels of awareness**. We begin with the properties of Soul.

2. Creation and properties of Soul

The definition of Soul comes very well through the two dictionaries as follows: Oxford—non-material part of a person, believed to exist for ever; Webster's—an entity without material reality, regarded as the spiritual part of a person. Putting them together we can say that, "Soul is the non-material and spiritual part of a person, that exists for ever". I feel satisfied with this definition.

Bhagavad-Gita (Prabhupad, 1968) records the teachings of Lord Krishna, spoken several millennia ago, with the following substance. For the Soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. As the embodied Soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, Soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change. Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the non-existent (the material body) there is no endurance and of the eternal (Soul) there is no change. This they have concluded by studying the nature of both. No one is able to destroy that imperishable Soul. As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the Soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones. The Soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. The individual Soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same. It is said that the Soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body. All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation. Some look on the Soul as amazing,

some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all.

It is believed that it is not for the first time that Bhagavad-Gita was spoken by Lord Krishna in the battlefield of Mahabharata some five thousand years ago. It is on the planet Sun some tens of thousand years ago that sage Manu taught the principles of Bhagavad-Gita. And again at some future date the same principles will be taught. Aldous Huxley called it perennial philosophy (Huxley, 1944).

And now it is a pleasant surprise to see that the psychics, mediums and past-life-regressionists are independently discovering the same principles. More details about the physics of the Soul are coming up. Souls are found to be made of energy, they are beings of light, they can take on any shape they want-sometimes appearing in human form, sometimes as streaks of light or blobs of energy. Whatever the form, it is totally alive energy which is thinking, feeling being with memories, unresolved issues, and a sense of humor (Bodine, 1999). Soul is mightier than space, stronger than time, deeper than the sea, and higher than the stars (Twitchell, 1970). While out-of-the-body as a Soul, the perceptions suddenly get highly intensified, for example, the crying of a child in the neighboring room becomes clearer and louder (Willson, 1987).

Soul travel is an important aspect of the Soul, which needs attention. The Soul is connected with the body through a "silver cord" which can stretch to an unlimited length when the Soul travels out of the body. The cord is severed only at the time of physical death. It is the conscious mind, which governs the journey of the Soul out of the body or back into the body. Although major Soul travel experiences take place during sleep, the Soul also goes out for small trips during waking hours, although we do not consciously know about it. Some of the symptoms, which indicate a possible out-of-the-body experience of Soul during sleep, are as follows.

- (i) Most of the flying dreams which appear to be real.
- (ii) Dreams of visiting deceased loved ones, which appear to be real.
- (iii) Dreams of being close to a loved one living in a far away place, with a sad feeling of a forced separation on waking up.
- (iv) Sometimes you wake up in the middle of the night but you can neither open your eyes nor move your body, nor you can open your mouth to tell someone about it.
- (v) You are shaken for a second in the middle of the night, but you go to sleep again after a momentary waking up.

There are moments when the Soul goes out of the body for brief periods during waking hours. It happens during intense emotional feelings, such as the concern for a sick loved one, or desire of being with a loved one who is far away, or seeing a cherished part of the world which you cannot visit physically, or checking up the children or some work in progress in another part of the city. One feels like daydreaming or going blank during such periods of absence of the Soul from the body. During such periods you may kiss or hug a person briefly; the person will not know it consciously but will have a feeling of being loved. Many times you may feel that someone is calling you by name; in fact a Soul is actually around and calling you, but the physical senses do not have the capacity of sensing it. There is a barrier on conscious mind created by "amnesia", so that the mind cannot know everything the Soul knows. That is why when the Soul goes out briefly, the mind goes blank. The Soul has visited the loved one, but the conscious mind does not know about it. The Soul uses the body and mind for the experiences of the current incarnation; the body and mind are limited within the five senses but the Soul is not.

There are some other situations in which soul travel takes place. If you go to bed with some unsolved problem in mind, the Soul may go out of the body and talk to other Souls to find the solution, and you wake up with an answer in the morning. You do not consciously know the homework done by the Soul, but you are happy for the discovery, of course. The Soul regularly

goes out to the other side and talks to the spirit guides. When physically unable to take a vacation, the Soul may travel out of the body when it is asleep, visit the place of interest, such as a garden or a hill station for quite some time. You wake up refreshed with a smile in the morning, not knowing again the homework done by the Soul. Sometimes you see the whole experience as a dream, and feel happy about having dreamt of the place of your liking. Yet the reason of happiness is the Soul-travel. In the case of an abuse, the Soul may leave the body at the start, and return when it is over. For few months before and after birth, the Soul is known to go out and recenter the body, as many times as it likes. The same thing happens when you are in the process of dying, sometimes for the completion of an unfinished task, and sometimes for preparing home on the other side.

Although Soul-travel dreams occur spontaneously, some people learn how to induce them. And again, although the state of sleep is conducive to the experience, it is not necessary to sleep to have an out-of-body-experience. Terrill Wilson (1987) could consciously come out of his body after about a year's practice of concentration. He used to focus his attention at a distant place, feel the smell of the room, think about the history of things in there etc. For several years he traveled from one layer to another and interacted with many people on the way. He has prescribed improved formulas for coming out of the body. However, in the end he says that it is the spiritual perfection and not Soul-travel which should be our aim.

Robert A. Monroe has established an institution for Soul-travel in United States after writing several books on out-of-body experiences. There are three techniques that can be used for the purpose. First, is the technique of "mind awake and body asleep", in which one tries to remain conscious when the body goes to sleep. Slowly one enters the twilight zone, which is the Middle State between sleeping and waking, and then one can think of becoming lighter and lighter, and finally rising up and moving away. Either one feels the sensation of moving out through the top of the head or one suddenly finds oneself in the subtle body. Second, is the technique of "rotation" in which one attempts to turn over without using arms and legs for help, while in the twilight zone. After turning through 180 degrees, one should think of floating up and away from the body. Third, is the technique of "sexual energy", in which one arouses one's passions and then sublimates the energy instead of releasing it physically. One should imagine the energy as a white globe rising from the root center (mooladhar chakra) to the eyebrow center (ajna chakra) or the crown center (sahasrar) and then rising up and away from the body. Some people feel a roaring or buzzing sensation while going out-of-body, like the vibrations of a motor when you start it. There are different experiences with different people while undergoing Soul-travel.

Although the time of creation of the Souls cannot be traced back, some believe that it was ten billion or so years ago. However, we all hear about references to old Souls and new Souls, which means that old Souls are the ones who have lived many life times and have gained wisdom in the process, while the new ones have not yet lived many lives. Old Souls move very fast out of their bodies towards Home in heavens, average Souls do not move so rapidly, while younger Souls remain attached to Earth's environment right after death (Newton, 1994). Souls in high state of advancement are often found in humble circumstances on earth. Those living in high influential society are not in a blissful state of Soul maturity. Advanced souls do not feel lonely. Richness of diversity and capacity to be alone is a measure of emotional and spiritual maturity. All this may suggest that the creation of Souls has been taking place at different times or that God has been creating Souls continually.

A past life regressionist (Newton, 2000) has taken a number of people out of their bodies under hypnosis, and has collected information about the creation of Souls. There exists a sort of "Soul nursery" as reported by some newly born younger Souls, and also by some "Incubator Mothers" who help in hatching the eggs and looking after the newly born Souls. Nursery is a vast emporium unlimited by outside dimensions, gaslike with swirling currents of energy above and intense light. The new Souls stay in their incubator cells until they are grown enough to be taken

out of the emporium. New Souls are “small masses of white energy” encased in gold sacs moving majestically on orchestrated line of progression. Incubator mothers in their “delivery suits” receive them and nurture them. The origin of production is a “molten mass” of high-intensity energy and vitality, which is energized by some “amazing love force” rather than some heat source. The mass has the color of the inside of cyclids and pulsates and undulates. A swelling begins in the mass, it increases, pushes outwards and separates as a “new Soul”, alive with energy and a “distinctness”. Beyond the mass one can see the beatific glow of orange-yellow, and a “violet darkness” beyond.

The incubator mothers hover around the hatching so that they can towel-dry them after opening the gold sacs. It is like hugging the new white energy, with blue and violet glowing around them. It is like a string of pearls moving on a silvery conveyer belt. There comes a life force of all-knowing love and knowledge and awakening takes place in the Soul through the touch of the mother. Each Soul has unique characteristics by a “perfection” which can not be described. **No two Souls are alike, none-ever.** In other words, source is like a divine mother who would never create twin children. The Creator appears to be around but unrecognizable and perhaps assisted by others.

The purpose of creation of the world and Souls appears to develop us and the world to the highest possible potential. An unlimited number of life times have been given to each Soul to learn in the school of earth, away from the true home where we belong. Perfection already exists in the heavens, but each Soul has to reach that stage of perfection individually. This needs going through a large variety of “down-to-earth-experiences” and learn everything first-hand, until one achieves godhood.

It is hard for science and even layman to believe the reality of the spirit world since the phenomena there “exist outside of the electromagnetic spectrum that defines what science uses to characterize our physical world” (Gough and Shaklett, 2000). Nevertheless, individual scientists keep trying to bridge the gap between science and spirit world. Modern researchers have used electronic instruments to show that “individuals on the astral plane have a body composed of finer matter and vibrations. There is no sickness, and sexual intercourse exists without pregnancy. Their thoughts create their reality and they communicate telepathically. One’s personality is unchanged from what it was on Earth, yet intellectual growth continues. One’s mind determines the body’s appearance, missing limbs are reestablished, disfigurements become perfect and the age one appears is subject to choice, usually between 25 to 30. Individuals materialize ‘synthetic food’. The astral plane is considered an interim place where one either reincarnates back to physical Earth, moves to another planet, or moves to a higher level (or plane)” (Kumar, 2001).

3. Levels of Awareness

There have been recent attempts by some scientists to define the creation of Souls and seven levels of universe (Kubis and Macy, 1995). Although it is an attempt to justify the age old religious beliefs through limited scientific tools and knowledge at present, nevertheless, it has two benefits: firstly, it encourages science to develop in that direction, secondly, religious beliefs get further confirmed. For example, it has been convincingly shown already that there are seven levels of existence as a common denominator to most faiths and traditions (Kumar, 2001). According to their model creation process flows from a phase of reality that is preform and potential. “Light” serves as “mother” to physical reality, and it means the entire electromagnetic spectrum. Under right circumstances, light and matter can switch identities. They propose the existence of multiple three-dimensional spaces and times that are coexistent and interpenetrating. Each interpenetrating space has its own physics with different physical properties and time. Thus each 3-D space has a different speed of light. There is connectiveness to everything in the universe, including living cells and human beings.

Taking analogy from “an apparent cosmic design law for sevenness”, they propose that there are seven major levels. Believing universe to be torus, its seven colors would correspond to the seven stages, which might be expected in the process. These seven stages are related to seven *kingdoms* starting with light and ending in “man” that cumulatively increase in power. Sevenness appears in sound waves in the seven fundamental tones of Western music. Coming to non-Western music, there are in Indian music seven basic tones. There are seven colors in the rainbow. Elements in our universe are arranged in seven rows of the periodic table. In Kaballah seven Sefirot would correspond to seven levels of substance in present model. In metaphysics there are seven major chakras. Modern researchers of the brain/mind and levels of consciousness, also sometimes use a seven-level symbolic interpretation. The scientists finally say, “If the sevenness is the cosmic property, then it could represent a constraint imposed by the creation pattern in the generation of space-time. Science has nothing to say about creation patterns. However, individuals with experiences exploring at other levels might be able to give us clues”.

I would personally agree with their proposition that “sevenness is the cosmic property” and that the “creation pattern could impose a constraint in the generation of space-time”. Furthermore, clues given by exploring individuals will help develop science. I have given details about seven levels of transformation through the opening of seven chakras on the passage of Kundalini (Kumar, 2000). It is also possible that etheric-like doubles accompany physicality at the other levels, similar to the etheric-double on physical plane. Sri Aurobindo has said that “purusha” exist on all the levels of existence. By meditating and by the process of going within, one can travel to various levels of existence in one’s astral body with angels or guides; see for example, the recent case of Echo Bodine (1999). Properties of the Soul at seven levels can be described as follows.

Level 1: It is the beginning of consciousness and karma, where people are mostly concerned with themselves and their survival, live in fear and are unaware of the connection that exists between all living beings. People at this level ignore the inner voice, which tells about right and wrong. They live in life-tight compartments and are unconcerned with the law of karma. They do not believe in a power outside themselves, and secular and spiritual laws are not applicable to them. People at this level treat everyone in a primitive way, and they worry about their own gratification, unconcerned about the need of others. Love in the greater sense has not yet sprouted in them.

Level 2: People are similar to level one by and large, but they have begun to love others, are less self-concerned and less fearful. They begin to give some love and consideration to others. Others are not so unimportant to them and also not a threat to their existence. Although they revert back to the old ways, their heart is beginning to open to others.

Level 3: People at this level have faith in God and they believe more in oneness with other human beings. Regarding love and hurt they believe in Newton’s third law of motion—to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Moving between fear and survival, they begin to learn to trust and understand the law of karma. They follow some religious path and begin to take steps in a positive direction towards a broader belief system. They begin to take risk with others and try to understand the similarities between themselves and others.

Level 4: People at this level still have karma to settle and lessons to learn through further incarnations. Having spent difficult times in various lives on levels one to three, they look forward for help for a greater understanding of the reality. They are inquisitive, they join organizations of metaphysical and spiritual nature, and their search for truth begins in some way. Battle between physical addictions and spiritual values is a high light of level four. Recovery

from addictions takes place at this level. Impermanence of the physical world is realized and detachment from it takes place. They enjoy the lessons they have learnt and values they have accrued. They meet others with an open heart, and move from organized religions to truly spiritual path. Their wounds and pains have healed, negative acts have been amended, karma has settled to 51 % or more, any wants no longer exist, they take responsibility of things and do not blame others, and they like to understand more with their evolutionary advancement. Many Souls at this level who have settled the karma and who can move to level 5, still prefer to come back to earth to educate their fellow beings. We can call them angels or avatars.

Level 5: Having settled all kinds of struggles and conflicts, Souls of fifth level have no reason to return to earth. People at this level understand their oneness with God and the whole creation. Level five is the beginning of “nirvana”. The Soul, which is completely at this level, does not reincarnate any more, although It has the option to do so, if It wants. Souls at this level are teachers or guides. They prefer not to reincarnate on lower levels, which are heavier in vibrations. Their karma is balanced and pains are healed. Souls have no grieving, no resentments and no blaming of God or others. Forgiveness is the hallmark. They are completely out of negative emotions, such as, hatred; fear or war and they focus on love and healing. They are like angels.

Telepathy is the means of communication here. Beings of this level can change from essence to form, whenever they like, although they don't see the need of it. Their movement is like fluid.

Level 6: It is the level of blissfulness, which cannot be measured with earthly yardsticks of physicality. Souls at this level have transcended physical consciousness and are open to level seven.

Level 7: It is the level of complete retirement.

Souls spend several lifetimes on each level. New Souls begin with level one, and they may be spending 20 to 30 lifetimes on earth or similar worlds before graduating to level two. Karma created on level one is then resolved on level two in say another 20 to 30 lifetimes, till one finds another way of living. Same thing may happen on level three. Old Souls are found on level four, which is the last level on earth. Level four may have some grieving, but there is none on level five. One may compare first three levels with day care, nursery and kindergarten, respectively. Having risen to a certain level one does not look back again. The movement is forward only.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Ravindra kumar obtained his Ph.D. in Mathematics in 1968 from Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. He has taught mathematics for more than 30 years in 8 countries. He has more than 30 publications and 4 books in mathematics. In 1987 he experienced the awakening of Kundalini while at the university of Zimbabwe, as a result of regular yoga and meditation for several years. Soon after that he began to have paranormal experiences and his focus shifted from mathematics to religion and parapsychology. He has now about 15 publications in JRPR and has authored three books in the fields of *Numerology*, *Spiritual Awakening*, and *Kundalini*. His next book *Kingdom of Heaven and Kundalini* is presently under publication process. Early this year his 8 mini books have appeared in the market: *Hatha Yoga*, *Kundalini Yoga*, *Kriya Yoga*, *Chakras and Nadis*, *Dreams*, *Aura*, *Mantra* and *Psychic Development*.

He resigned his position as professor of mathematics in 1994. Later he worked as professor of Comparative Religion at Belk Research Foundation, NC, USA and as professor of Yoga Philosophy and Meditation at Hindu University, Florida, USA for some time. He is the Founder President of the Academy of Kundalini Yoga and Quantum Soul with centers in Florida, Copenhagen, London and New Delhi. He teaches Integral Yoga and initiates people on Spiritual Path. He believes that the dormant energy can be awakened in about 5 years if one follows the program rigidly. He can be reached at Sofus Francks Vaenge 6, 6; DK 2000, Frederiksberg, Denmark. Ph: (45) 36 16 92 50. Email: lytteRavi.Kumar@mail.tele.dk

MEMORY IN THE NEAR-DEATH AND POSTMORTEM
LIFE REVIEWS: DIVINE OR HUMAN?

William H. Tallmadge

The nature of the numerous near-death panoramic life reviews and the very few near-death judgmental, empathic life reviews is described. The earlier and relatively unknown postmortem life reviews are brought to the attention of those interested in the subject. After describing the judgmental, empathic life review, Kenneth Ring poses two questions: (1) "What could be a more perfect form of justice?" and (2) "What Solon could devise anything fairer?" The remainder of the presentation presents an amplification of the postmortem judgmental life review which takes place in the memory of the God-Field. This offers redress to the victim of injustice which would appear to be a more perfect form of justice than that described in near-death life reviews.

Most of us are familiar with the near-death experience as popularized in 1975 by Raymond A. Moody in his book, *Life After Life*. Furthermore, members of the Academy have been kept abreast of developments in this area mainly through the writings of Barbara R. Rommer, who has presented a paper on the subject at the last four annual meetings.

Boyce Batey presented a paper, "Beyond the Veil: Evidence For Life After Death," at the 1999 confer-

ence of the Academy . He noted that:

. . . in the past 25 years,. . . statistically, some 14 million people in the United States alone, have passed through that portal which we call death and have come back . . .to tell what it is like to die. These people are clinically dead When they come back, they are no longer afraid to die because they know what it means to die. Having encountered the unconditionally loving Being of Light, they have integrated and assimilated this unconditional love so that they themselves become unconditionally loving.(5)

The core elements of the near-death experience (NDE) which Moody developed from interviews with subjects, have been generally accepted by subsequent writers.The order of the items often varies, nor are all of them always present.

1. Hearing himself pronounced dead by his doctor
2. The out-of-body experience
3. Moving rapidly through a dark tunnel
4. The light at the end of the tunnel
5. Feelings of peace and quiet
6. The Being of Light
7. The life review
8. Turned back by the Being of Light
9. Return to life
- 10.The ineffability of the experience (Moody 1976, 21-23)

Panoramic Life Review

The first person in the late nineteenth century to discuss and research the subject of the panoramic life review was Albert Heim, a Swiss geologist. He survived a fall as a mountain climber, but during the fall he had a typical rapid life review. His total life passed rapidly before him. It was devoid of all emotion. Afterwords he investigated other fall survivors and found such experiences were quite common among

them.

A review cited by Margot Grey in her *Return From Death* is typical of the NDE panoramic review.

This radiation of love entered me and instantly I was part of it or it was a part of me. There was instant communication. My entire life [went by in an instant] snap, like that, He, God--I'm not afraid to call him that--knew: everything, right off the bat, . . . there are no words, it was instant communication.(1985, 82)

There seems to be a general agreement because of experiments with subjects under hypnosis, that everyone is capable of recalling all or most events which have been experienced in a lifetime. Consequently, during the NDE panoramic life review, memory may be derived from the experiencer.

NDE Empathic Life Review

Before 1998, when Kenneth Ring, perhaps the principal theorist of the near-death phenomenon, published his *Lessons from the Light*, there were probably no more than ten judgmental, empathic near-death life reviews published. One of these occurred in 1978 when Tom Sawyer had a NDE.

At 33 years of age, in Rochester, New York, Tom was underneath his truck. . . . the blacktop on the road gave way under the jacks allowing the truck to partially crush his chest and stop his breathing. Tom experienced the core elements of a complete NDE except for no.1 (He was not pronounced dead by a doctor). As he came to the end of the tunnel he was confronted by the Being of Light.

Now being at the end of the tunnel and standing before the light, it seemed that it covered the entire vista before me. It was more beautiful than I've tried to describe, because I could use all the superlatives, and

then I'd have to say: *but it was more*. . . . The light I am describing is whatever most people would describe as God. . . . (Farr 1993, 27)

Tom had an aunt who was growing some wild flowers in her back yard. He knew about these flowers, but his father had told him to mow the lawn and cut the weeds which included the wild flowers. Tom could have explained the situation to his father, but he decided to deliberately mow everything.

I relived every exact thought and attitude; even the air temperature and things that I couldn't have possibly measured when I was eight years old. . . . I not only re-experienced my eight-year-old attitude and the kind of excitement and joy of getting away with something, but I was also observing this entire event as a thirty-three-year-old adult; . . . But it was more than that. I also experienced it exactly as though I was my Aunt Gay, several days later after the weeds had been cut, when she walked out the back door. I knew the series of thoughts that bounced back and forth in her mind. . . . What I'm telling you is, I was in my Aunt Gay's body, I was in her eyes, I was in her emotions, I was in her unanswered questions. I experienced the disappointment, the humiliation. . . . (30-31)

Note that such empathy--the feeling of the other's emotions as well as thoughts-- could not have been derived from human memory or experience. The source of such memory would need to be a form of cosmic memory or what I prefer to call the God-Field.

The Life Review as The Most Significant Element in the NDE

By 1998 Kenneth Ring had come to believe that the life review was the most important element of the NDE. In fact, two out of his fourteen chapters in his *Lessons from the Light* are devoted to the subject. In

these two chapters Ring finds a deeper significance in the judgmental, empathic reviews. For example, some time after 1995 Ring interviewed his student, Neevon Spring, who had had a NDE in 1988. Neev explained:

I . . . relived my life. I felt everything . . . When I say 'everything,' I mean every cut, pain, emotion and sense associated with that particular time in my life. At the same time, I saw the effects of my life on the people around me. . . felt all that they felt . . . (Ring 1998, 22)

Commenting on this type of review, Ring observed that,

In the life review, you will actually experience the episode as you *would have been* able to then, had you been totally present to the event--sensorily, psychologically, and telepathically!. . . And, finally, and perhaps most remarkably of all, during the life review, you seem to have telepathic understanding of others' thoughts and emotions to such an extent that there is a virtually complete empathic identification possible. (174-175)

I agree with Ring as to the significance of the deep, empathic life review, yet I would issue a few words of caution. Actually we have hardly more than a half-dozen or so of the empathic variety published in pre-1990 books. For example, I glanced through Dr. Barbara R. Rommer's recent book, *Blessing in Disguise*. Of 92 Pleasant and Less-Than-Positive Near-Death Experiences, there were only three judgmental, empathic life reviews. There may be more in the journals sponsored by IANDS (International Association for Near-Death Studies). But certainly the paucity of the latter type of life review suggests to me that one might be wise not to lend more weight to the empathic NDE life review than their small number will bear.

Postmortem Life Reviews

I find it strange that, with one exception, in the entire literature on the NDE there seems to be no awareness that well before the revelations of Raymond Moody a number of significant elements of the core experience had already been reported by discarnate spirits through mediumistic channels.

Much has been written in questioning and defending the veracity of the NDE. As Carol Zaleski observes: "While the skeptics propose an abundance of physiological, pharmacological, and psychological solutions to the puzzle, the researchers resolutely defend the unexplained status of near-death experience; for every [skeptic's] explanation, they offer a counterexplanation." (1987,164).

Essentially, all of the skeptical arguments are indirectly if not directly based on the following statement by Karl Jansen: "Irrespective of religious beliefs, the NDE can never be evidence for life after death on logical grounds: death is defined as the final, irreversible end, and anyone who "returned" did not, by definition, die." (Bailey & Yates eds., 1996, 267)

D. Scott Rogo in his *Life After Death* echoes that statement. He notes that : "These two problems--that we don't know whether the witnesses were ever really dead, and that their experience may be due to *anoxia* [the cutting off of oxygen to the brain]--are extremely hard to refute." (1986,74) What follows not only appears to be a refutation, but also seems to render the entire debate irrelevant since the persons doing the reporting are persons who have truly died.

Robert Crookall

I am indebted to Robert Crookall's *The Supreme*

Adventure for his study and concordance of statements about postmortem life reviews received through mediums. Robert Crookall Ph.D., a Britisher, was a geologist with degrees in psychology and science.

Postmortem Panoramic Life Review

One of Crookall's communicators declares that, "There is a review of the past earth-life. It is of an impersonal, non-emotional and non-responsible nature, in which respects it differs from the Second Review." (Crookall 1961, 59) Crookall then lists two pages of examples of panoramic life reviews. They range in dates from 1910 through 1955. Typical is the following: "I was unconscious for just a moment [at death]. Then my entire life unreeled itself." (12)

Core of the Postmortem Experience

The core elements of postmortem experiences (PME) collected by Robert Crookall that are in common with NDE core experiences include the out-of-body experience, the dark tunnel, the life review (both panoramic and empathic) and the ineffability of the experience. Core elements from the NDE that one would have expected to see in the postmortem experiences cited by Crookall are the radiant light at the end of the tunnel, and the Radiant Being of Light that in the NDE appears to initiate the process of the life review.

There is no way to know for certain why these differences occur between the NDE and the PME. Many experiencers of both varieties speak of the ineffability of the experience, particularly the experience of the life review. Apparently the extreme difficulty of conveying the experience in words is greatly magnified

when it concerns a discarnate attempting to communicate through a medium.

Another reason for the differences between the NDEs and the PME's is that the NDEers are destined to return to life, whereas the PMEers have no such immediate destination. In other words the NDEer receives his or her experience in order to lead a more loving and purposeful life. Dr. Rommer seems to agree with this observation. She writes in *Blessing in Disguise* :

I firmly believe that both the pleasant Near-Death Experiences and the Less-Than Positive Experiences most often occur because of the need or desire of the experimenter. (2000 p. x x i)

The PMEer, on the other hand, is possibly given the experience in order to initiate the process of judgment, redemption and salvation.

Judgmental, Empathic Postmortem Life Reviews

Crookall introduces his chapter on "The Judgment" as follows:

An after-death experience which is known as the "Judgment" is envisaged in every religion. According to [spirit] "communications," it is essentially an emotional and a personally-responsible review of the past earth-life which, with *average* people who die *natural* deaths, occurs within a few months (reckoned in our time) of "passing" (p. 42)

His listed PME communications are similar to those cited from the NDEs, but the descriptions include only the bare occurrences with none of the elaboration which we found in the NDE empathic reviews. For example:

"I saw my life unfold before me in a procession of images. One is faced with the effects emotionally of all one's actions. " (45)

The following exception to the rule includes a more elaborate description of the empathic, judgmental postmortem review:

An elderly friend of Miss Gibbes, one who had led "a somewhat selfish life," . . . said that she had been "looking back" over her life [. . . the first, non-emotional, review, . . .] Two years later, she communicated and described her "Judgment" thus: "I have had the most disturbing experiences.. . . One of the tasks set me was that of looking back. I have been shown the effects of all my acts upon other people's minds. Their thoughts were shown to me. It was the most humiliating and awful experience. . . "Crookall, 45)

Ineffability

We have discovered that judgmental, empathic life reviews are very rare in the NDE. This situation accords perfectly with reports from PMEers: that the panoramic review comes immediatly at death, whereas the judgmental, empathic review occurs at a later time. In addition, both NDEers and PMEers usually speak of the ineffability of the experience. Darryl Reannee expresses this point in his book *Music of the Mind*: ... "speech is fatally flawed because it seeks to recreate in sequential pieces the all-at-once fullness of an insight that is usually destroyed by the very act of speaking it." (Reannee 1994,42)

PMEers have the additional burden of trying to filter what can't be told in words through a secondary source: the mind and words of a medium.

David Lorimer

I mentioned earlier that: with one exception, NDEers and authors who wrote about them were unaware that discarnates, speaking through mediums, had been describing similar experiences since the turn of the 20th century. The exception that I had in mind was the Englishman, David Lorimer, who in his 1990 book, *Whole in One*, made a study of both the NDE and PME. His information concerning the latter was derived mainly from Robert Crookall's book.

Lorimer was educated at Eton and the Universities of St. Andrews and Cambridge. He taught languages and philosophy, and was chairman of the International Association of Near-Death Studies in the United Kingdom. He was apparently the first author to make a clear distinction between the panoramic review which he terms the "panoramic memory" and the judgmental, empathic review which he simply calls "the life review."

Memory

Lorimer has no difficulty in accounting for panoramic memory in either the NDE or the PME. Under the fear of an accident, the shock of an accident or of death itself, the complete memory of an individual becomes available to him in the manner previously described. But in order to account for the type of memories experienced in the judgmental, empathic life review, Lorimer turns to the interrelationship of minds manifested in paranormal experiences. He summarizes his findings in this regard:

I began with panoramic memory, distinguishing it from the more emotionally charged experience of the life review, and then . . . sketched a theory of memory. This theory was illustrated with reference to hauntings, atmospheres in particular places, and psychometry [object-reading] all suggesting a kind of field as

sociated with the object, place or person. This enables the sensitive to tune in to certain memory images by a process of empathetic resonance . . . This same tuning in to the experience of others occurs in telepathy, clairvoyance, hauntings, 'atmospheres' in particular places, and psychometry.(1990,41)

Although he does not state it explicitly, the clear implication of Lorimer here is that since some people can access the actions, emotions, and feelings of others by paranormal means in this world, it is certain that in the next world, where the paranormal is normal, everyone will have total insight into the thoughts, emotions, and history of everyone else.

I do not disagree with Lorimer's conception, but I believe that the God-Field is a more direct and likely source of memory for the judgmental, empathic life review in both the NDE and PME.

Justice

After considering the lessons of the near-death life reviews, Kenneth Ring mused upon the nature of justice and posed a question:

I do not know about you, but meditating on these implications of the life review makes me think about justice in a new way, too. It occurs to me, what could be a *more perfect* form of justice than this: Everything you do becomes yours. It is not that we are rewarded for our good deeds or punished by our cruel ones; it is simply that we receive back what we have given out, . . . What Solon could devise anything fairer? (162-163)

My feeling is that true justice can occur only when the innocent victim of injustice receives redress and is compensated in some way for his or her experience of injustice. In current descriptions of the NDE and PME life reviews, evildoers are punished by having to ex-

perience the effects of all that they have done. Those who do good are rewarded through experiencing all of the joys they have provided to others. But nowhere in the present world or in the world of the NDE or PME as it has been described are all of the innocent victims of violence and injustice compensated for their suffering.

There is little doubt in my mind that descriptions by NDEers and PMEers represent reality as they see it and as they are able to express it. Furthermore, there is little doubt in my mind that each of us will have such experiences. Lorimer, himself, however, cites the reason which explains why the system of justice exemplified in the judgmental, empathic life review is not the perfect system Kenneth Ring imagines it to be.

It was the inconclusive nature of human affairs and justice that led many thinkers, including Kant, to formulate the moral argument for immortality: it is an outrage to the moral sense that there should be no ultimate redress or compensation for injustice, therefore such redress and compensation must be assumed to take place in the post-mortem metaphysical dimension. . . . God [is] the guarantor of justice. . . . (Lorimer 1990, 268)

Lorimer goes on to note that Kant's argument failed to impress many philosophers, nor was it accepted by theologians except in a disguised form. He adds that the argument requires "a metaphysical order." Indeed it does, for it is obvious that justice of this kind is impossible in the finite world. Lorimer also observes that it is an "*a priori* intuition, . . . not empirically grounded in experience." (268) But to this he adds that if we take the data of the life-review seriously, the entire picture changes [my emphasis].

The experiencing of events from another person's point of view provides a framework of moral order which is a sanction in the metaphysical order of the

kind postulated by Kant; furthermore, it is . . . an insight derived from human experience and therefore [it is] empirically grounded.”(269)

Redress and Compensation for Injustice

One can say “Amen” to that statement of David Lorimer, but to fill in the frame so that it reflects true justice, it will be necessary to expand upon the near-death and postmortem experiences, and try to fill in much of what the experiencers and spirits say is ineffable.

Mystics, lamas, trance-meditators, prophets, yogins, and deep thinkers have had visions, intuitions, and ratiocinations that later have been accepted as truth. I believe that Marjorie Suchocki, Professor of Theology at the School of Theology in Claremont, and author of the book *God Christ Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*, has described judgment, justice and redemption in a manner which does not conflict with descriptions in the NDE and PME life reviews. In addition, her conception and elaborations upon the descriptions of NDEers and PMEers, appears to satisfy Emanuel Kant’s moral argument for immortality, which current descriptions of life-reviews do not.

To begin with, Suchocki notes that, “In historical life there simply is no fullness of justice.” (1998, 200) If justice, compensation, and redress for injustice are to take place, they must take place in the life of the world to come. In her words, “The partiality of God’s reign in history will meet the fullness of God’s reign in the life of the world to come.” (199)

Before describing a hypothetical PM life review, I want to posit the following axiom derived from Alfred North Whitehead, founding father of process theology. This axiom and the one to follow, however, are filtered through Suchocki’s thought.

The process model of God as an actual entity pushes us to say that God is heaven, and heaven is God. We must express resurrection as taking place in the life of God and through the power of God. . . . [my emphasis].(202)

My own conception of God as a God-Field appears to accord with what I have read about Process Theology. The Process God is not a God of miracles. Therefore, that God is one that most scientists could live with. It does not seem to be inappropriate to Process thought to consider that the God-Field came into existence with the "Big Bang" when all vibrations came into existence. In some inexplicable manner either the total number of vibrations or one set of them developed consciousness and possessed the attributes of creativity, morality, love, compassion, intelligence beyond our comprehension, and total memory. Perhaps loneliness caused the God-Field to have a desire to replicate itself with consciousnesses similar to itself. In any event, the God-Field, being a form of consciousness, could only create at the particle and wave level; but just as some of our own minds have the capacity to accomplish paranormal activities, including psychokinesis, it is certain that the God-Field would at least have these capacities, and more than likely would have them to a much greater extent. Therefore, over the billions of years this world has been in existence, the God-Field was able to develop the material and spiritual world to its present level. Those individuals, both past and present, who have attained the level of cosmic consciousness envisioned by Richard M. Bucke in his book, *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901), existed and exist as proof that the God-Field has made progress in developing the spirituality of human consciousness towards its own level.

Memory Source

David Lorimer, already mentioned, finds the paranormal to be a source for the ability of NDEers and PMEers who appear to draw upon a memory source which they do not personally possess. Others have spoken of cosmic memory, cosmic mind at large, the great memory, and universal memory. Barbara Rommer explains an aspect of what that implies:

Since we know that energy is never totally destroyed, every single previous thought we have ever had becomes a part of universal consciousness and every action of our lifetime becomes a part of cosmic memory. (30)

I am quite satisfied with the concept expressed by Suchocki in her explication of Process Theology: that God [the God-Field] "feels [and remembers] the entirety of the world in all its manifold forms." (Suchocki 205)

Life Review

Following is another axiom which is basic to the idea of the God-Field as a complete memory source.

Resurrection takes place not [only] upon the death of the whole person, but throughout life, as God continuously feels [and remembers] the occasions of the world [my emphasis]. (Suchocki, 210).

This is a remarkable conception. It seems obvious and right, yet I do not recall seeing it before. It plays a central role in the process of judgment, justice, and the transformation and redemption of those moving into the spiritual realm.

Marjorie Suchocki in her search for judgment and

justice considers the death of a lady in medieval Europe who was burned at the stake as a witch.

Injustice came upon her as a maelstrom, crumbling her world of meaning and well-being into a welter of panic, pain, and ashes. . . . Without 'the life of the world to come,' her unredeemed experience stands as a finality of injustice, mocking the power even of God's justice. Without resurrection, there is no fullness of justice. (200)

In describing the life review of this burned lady we are forced to convey our thoughts by means of words within a world of space and time. We are obliged to do this in a linear, sequential manner. The entire occasion or event, however, exists in the eternal instant of the God-Field, where all is simultaneity, where past, present, and future are one throughout eternity.

Panoramic Review

Upon entering the God-Field after her death, the lady experiences a panoramic review of her life. This is similar to the panoramic reviews previously cited except that the God-Field, which resurrected her from birth and thus experienced everything in her life, is now coexperencing all these occasions with her. The God-Field

. . . continuously coexperienced each moment of that woman's existence.. . her childhood, her teen years, . . her fright, terror, . . . and God felt the agony as the fire began its searing work. God felt her death. Because God felt with her every moment, there is resurrection in God. . . . This means, . . . that [she, as] the seven-year-old child feels the thirty-seven-year-old woman burning at the stake--but it also means that the thirty-seven-year-old woman feels again with a simultaneity the delights of other moments of her life. The regathered personality in God in the resur-

The Judgmental, Empathic Life Review

In the first phase of the second life review the lady begins the process of knowing herself as the God-Field knows her. The God-Field knows every event and every aspect in which the lady participated, it knows what she did and what she could have done on every occasion. In other words, it knows the probable futures of every individual occasion in this lady's life. So she not only knows herself as she was, as she is, but also knows every aspect of what she could have been. Suchocki notes that:

God has felt every single occasion in . . . our lives, and still feels them all. There is a composite gathering of the personality in God, and the totality is known for what it was and for what it could have been. (211)

This also means that whenever the lady made a choice throughout her life, at her death the God-Field would show her the moral, ethical, and spiritual results of each possibility. She sees where she made mistakes, but she also sees where her noble purposes were blocked by forces beyond her control. This contributes to her total understanding of herself and to her transformation and redemption.

In the next phase of this judgment Suchocki describes the judgmental, empathic life review in far greater depth than do the NDEers.

In God, those with whom one has come in contact are also resurrected, and the relationality that bound us with those others on earth is felt as well in heaven. . . each is mediated to the other, . . . Joys that were given will be experienced: alternatively, the same dynamics mean that pains that were inflicted will also be experienced. . . there is continued judgment. (212)

The judge who sentenced the lady also experiences resurrection in the God-Field. He will experience all aspects of the complete relationships that he has had with everyone he came in contact with throughout his life. He will experience the pain of the lady burning at the stake, and he will experience the God-Field's compassion for the lady. He will also experience the God-Field's co-experiencing the terrible end of the lady's life. In this the judge will experience the God-Field's judgment of wrath against himself as a form of Hell. But he will also experience and feel the joy and redemption of the lady. She contributes to his redemption. To cite Suchocki:

The judge moves from a knowledge of himself--mediated by God--to a knowledge of himself in God, which moves yet deeper into a knowledge of God. . . . For the ultimate transformation and unity in God is love, pervasive, deep, everlasting. . . . Thus judgment moves into justice. The increasing integration of the resurrected subjects in God pull them deeper into unity with each other. . . . In mutual completion, each experiences the other's joys, gratitude, wonder, and love. . . . The mighty center toward which we move in judgment is the overcoming of evil through its transformation by the power of God. In the center of God, the many are one everlastingly.(215)

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IS THE PHILOSOPHY OF REINCARNATION COMPATIBLE WITH
CHRISTIANITY?

David Christie-Murray

ABSTRACT

Different types of reincarnationist belief systems (RSBs) and of Christianity. Brief survey of some RSBs, ancient and modern, leading to a typical scenario with which to compare Christian philosophy. Establishment of latter by balancing the authority of Bible, Church and 'inner light' of personal conscience and conviction. Arguments against and for Reincarnation (general and Christian), culminating in view that Reincarnation and Purgatory are compatible in that both can represent a process of spiritual progress whereby the universal salvation of God's universe can be attained (whatever that unimaginable completion may mean). Closing survey of lines of evidence for Reincarnation.

Which philosophy? Which reincarnation? Which Christianity?

These are not flippant questions. Since belief in reincarnation is one of the oldest and most widespread in human thought, it would be strange if there were not varieties of RSBs (Reincarnation Belief Systems). New Stone Age burials ten millennia B.C. suggest an expectation of physical resurrection (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1968 ed., Vol. 9, p. 1014b) and, from classical times onwards, various types of RSB have existed throughout human cultures.

A major division of RSBs is into theistic and non-theistic systems. Since Christianity is a theistic belief, any non-theistic scheme cannot be wholly compatible with it. Both types of RSBs may, however, postulate two universes, one material, one spiritual, and that the salvation of humankind is to be found in escape from the former into the latter, after a succession of incarnations that may occupy millennia of time. Enlightenment for the Hindu, for example, which gives him *moksha* (liberation), comes when he realises that his apparently separate personality is an illusion and that he *is* the absolute Brahman, the ultimate principle, creator and sustainer of the universe (Knight, 1950, p.15). The Buddhist's goal is entry into Nirvana, a transcendent condition of ultimate truth, free from all craving for individual satisfaction, and of absolute immortality through the absorption of the soul into itself. Both religions include theistic and non-theistic sects.

Many RSBs that have existed in a variety of cultures and do exist today have a theistic theology in which there exists God who creates a material universe in which humanity works out its salvation in a series of incarnations and then returns to its home and source in him. Souls originating from God and his spiritual dimension may 'fall', tempted by the illusory attractions of the physical universe, but retain a 'spark of the Divine' that inspires them to work towards a reunion with their Origin. Such a concept could be compatible with Christian Traducianism – the doctrine of the soul's propagation with the

body – but not with Creationism, the view that God creates a new individual soul with each body.

An entity may exist as anything – a stone, a plant, an animal – and even when it has achieved humanity, may reincarnate as a beast. Such systems are more likely to be found in societies living near to nature. Some believe that their ancestors, especially the nobler among them, reincarnate as majestic animals – lions, hippopotamuses, boa-constrictors, birds with magnificent plumage – while humans of poor achievement or inferior status reappear, if at all, as inferior creatures. Other systems accept the ascent of ‘souls’ to become humans and maintain that once a human, always a human, though an individual may fall and rise in the quality of his humanity before his destiny is completed. After aeons of time and thousands of incarnations, he will reach his goal.

Some ancient RSBs were theologically sophisticated. Zoroastrianism (Zoroaster flourished between 618 and 541 B.C.) taught that souls are immortal and can achieve a kind of beatific vision after a process of purging. The *Works of Hermes Trismegistos*, popular during the first three centuries A.D. (Head and Cranston, 1967, pp 44-45) described all souls as deriving from the one soul of the universe. Their destiny was to earn immortality by knowing God and injuring no one and to obtain perfect glory by becoming pure intelligence. The Gnostic systems and mystery religions of classical times taught that ascent back to God was earned by initiation into ever more esoteric depths of knowledge, *gnosis*, keys that enabled the soul to pass through the successive spheres that veiled God from their apprehension. Not all these were reincarnationist but some themes appeared frequently – for example, the material world was something from which to escape.

Societies regarded as primitive often developed RBSs as sophisticated as those of more advanced communities. Thus, the Western Eskimos of Alaska believe in the existence of five ascending heavens through which souls can advance to reach deliverance from rebirth (Head and Cranston, 1979). Zulus worship a universal divine spirit, the I Tongo, of whom a spark is found within the souls of men which enables them to ascend through seven grades of development, escape incarnation and unite eventually with the I Tongo (Head and Cranston, 1979).

From these of the many RBSs that exist can be created a scenario with which to compare Christian philosophy – when it has been decided what that is!

A typical scheme would run somewhat as follows, There exist two universes, a material, physical cosmos which is largely illusory, *maya*, and behind, beyond and containing it, a ‘real’ apiritual universe. In theist RBSs this is the domain of God, in non-theist that of whatever impersonal process was necessary to bring it into existence.

From this God/Process emerged entities which, in time, evolved into human personalities. By a ‘fall from grace,’ these developed the illusion of being individuals living in a universe in which they had an ‘I – out there’ relationship with the material world interpreted as ultimate reality. There remained within them, however, a divine element which made them realise that there was a spiritual universe, their true home, to which they should strive to return.

The life of man soon proved to be ‘poor, nasty, brutish and short.’ Fortunately, human history was punctuated by great teachers who were able to found philosophies and religions that guided their followers into a knowledge of how they should behave to attain salvation, which could be described in various ways. All were, in essence, escape

from the material universe into the spiritual and a return to the Source from which their divine spark had originated.

Mere knowledge was not enough, except possibly for Gnostics. The fact that humanity had evolved in the material universe, meant that it had become subject to *karma*, that is, action, which had inevitable results on its doer and nailed him to the physical dimension. A man who craved food might fight another to get his share and, even if he did not harm his rival, might arouse enmity in him. Greed and resentment accumulated negative karma which would have to be paid for in this or future lives – for it was recognised that a single human existence was rarely long enough to neutralize all the accumulated karma. Even good karma was a handicap, because it caused its author to desire what was attractive in the physical universe and diverted him from seeking the greater good of unity with God/Process which was beyond all desire and his ultimate destiny.

With what version of Christianity do we compare such a schema?

There are three authorities which Christians have to take into account. The first is the source-book of their faith, the Bible – understood with all the light that scholarship can cast upon it. The second is the Church – not a particular denomination but believers who, in the definition of Vincent of Lerins (died c. 450) accept ‘that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all’ – a challengeable definition which, although it gets rid of denominational frippery, reduces Christianity to a very few fundamentals. The third is the inner light of personal conscience and conviction, which must be balanced with the other two and needs always to be used with caution and humility.

The Bible. Christianity shares the Old Testament with Judaism as one body of scriptures that includes various developments of the idea of human survival of physical death. The Talmud and Cabala are other Jewish documents not binding on Christians, which have a good deal to say about reincarnation and it is therefore surprising to find that there are only nine isolated texts in the Old Testament and Apocrypha quoted as support for it and then only by far-fetched interpretations which are usually destroyed by modern translations. *Joshua* 24 – 3 is a mere summary of Israel’s history from the time of Abraham to the conquest of Canaan. *Job* 14, 13ff cries, ‘If only God would hide me in the nether world if only man might die and live again’ (suggesting that he cannot). *Psalms* 90, 3, ‘Thou crumblest man away, summoning man back to the dust.’ *Proverbs* 8 is a hymn to Divine Wisdom which, properly understood, carries not a hint of reincarnation teaching. The message of *Ecclesiastes* 1, 9-11 is merely that there is nothing new under the sun. The surface meaning of *Jeremiah* 1, 4-5 is that God pre-ordained him before his birth to be a prophet. *Malachi* 4, 4-5 promises a return of Elijah as harbinger of the Day of the Lord, a prophecy quoted by Jesus in the New Testament Gospels; but as Elijah never died, this is not a reincarnation but a reappearance. In *Wisdom* 8, 19 – 20 Solomon claims, ‘I had received a good soul as my lot, or, rather, being good, I had entered an undefiled body.’ *Ecclesiasticus* 41, 11-12 states that godless men were born to be accursed, and, when they die, that curse would be their portion – ‘but a good reputation lasts for ever.’ Only the *Job* and *Wisdom* passages so much as hint at a reincarnation interpretation. When the prevalence of the belief from the earliest times throughout the world and the size of the Old Testament corpus of writings are considered, the paucity of references to RBSs amounts to a rejection.

In the New Testament the texts identifying John the Baptist with Elijah are linked with the *Malachi* passage above. Jesus was not necessarily equating John with Elijah any more than Shylock’s cry of ‘A Daniel come to judgement’ meant that Portia was the Hebrew sage reborn. There are two other passages which are susceptible of a

reincarnation explanation. The first is John's Gospel, Chapter 9. Jesus meets a beggar born blind. His disciples ask him who sinned, the man or his parents, that he was born blind (if it was the man, it must have been in a former life if he was *born* blind). By not repudiating the implication of reincarnation in his reply, 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him,' Jesus is argued by Christian reincarnationists to have supported rebirth. In another Johannine text, 14:2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' the word 'mansions' can be translated 'abodes' or 'inns along the road,' suggestive of at least a series of stages in the after-life. These texts are not strong enough to support reincarnation as a Christian dogma.

The Church. As the guardian of the faith, the Church inherited the Old Testament as a corpus of sacred writings from Judaism. By about the fourth century, before which the inclusion of certain books in it was debatable, the canon of the New Testament was universally recognised by the Church. In a sense, therefore, she exercised authority over the Scriptures, her leaders and scholars having approved them. Thereafter they established the interpretation of them for the ordinary believers, determining what was orthodox belief and what heretical.

Orthodoxy was even more firmly determined by the findings of the first seven great Councils of the Church (A.D. 325 – 787), recognised as Ecumenical by both the Orthodox and Catholic communions. Before their formulations, however, and while the books of the New Testament were being determined, there was time for the early Fathers to speculate in ways that would have classified some of them as heretics in later centuries.

Reincarnation had its share in their surmises. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100? – 163) describes the soul's inhabiting more than one human body and its inability to remember previous existences (*Ante-Nicene Library*, II, 1867, pp 92-93). Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150? – 220?) is ambiguous, stating the pre-existence of souls in his *Exhortation to the Heathen* - 'Before the beginning of the world were we rational creatures of the Word of God' - but writing in *Stromata*, IV, 12, 'God created us when we did not exist before.' Clement affirmed that his esoteric Christianity was not for everyone, thus supporting the claims of certain Christian sects that Christ handed down verbally to his disciples secret teaching that included reincarnation. Origen (A.D. 185 – c 254), possibly the greatest of the Greek Christian fathers, studied with Plotinus, founder of neo-Platonism, whose doctrine of reincarnation featured prominently in the famous Alexandrian School of Philosophy, founded 193. Plotinus taught that a superior part of the soul abode continuously in the 'intelligent world' of abstract forms - only a portion of it, desiring independence, was seduced into earthly living. This could find its way back to the world above and from its experience learn how blessed its abode there was. Origen taught the pre-existence of the soul, which had neither beginning nor end of life. All spirits were created blameless and after full perfecting, occupying successive bodies and worlds, return to their original flawlessness and enter heaven (*De Principiis*, IV, Cap 10. 23, 26).

It is frequently said that some of the great Ecumenical Church Councils anathematised reincarnation. No papal encyclical ever condemned it, perhaps because for about the first five centuries of the Church's history the Christian view of the after-life seems to have been heaven for the saved and hell for the rest, with purgatory appearing at a later date - Gregory the Great, A.D. 600, seems to have been the first eminent personage to suggest it. Although the idea had been a subject of speculation growing into popular acceptance for centuries before 1274, when it was approved in a credal section issued by the Second Council of Lyons, Purgatory was established as an article of faith only in 1439, by the

Council of Florence. Heaven, Purgatory and Hell became an adequate scenario for at least the Roman Church. Reincarnation could be consigned to the heretical sects which accepted it down the centuries.

What the western church did condemn were ideas supporting reincarnation, such as the pre-existence of an immaterial soul or spirit which had neither beginning nor end. Thus, Origen's ideas were condemned somewhat vaguely by the Second Council of Constantinople, A.D. 553 (Some of its decrees were not regarded as authoritative by sections of the Church.) Whatever the Roman Church expressed in its statements of faith, however, the savagery of its persecution of those who accepted reincarnation, especially the Albigensians, was indication enough of their opinion of it as heresy. No Christian who held it could be tolerated.

The Reformation did not immediately free moderate sinners from the fear of hell – if anything, humanity was the more threatened because belief in eternal punishment appeared not only scriptural but was the only alternative to heaven. Protestants found no Biblical authority for eventual escape via Purgatory. Had not Christ himself warned his disciples in the clearest possible terms against the dangers of ‘hell ... where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched’ (Mark’s Gospel, Ch. 9, v. 44)? They were unaware of a modern exegesis which interprets Christ’s words in their context as, ‘Gehenna is the rubbish-dump of Jerusalem, always spontaneously burning, always alive with maggots; it is better that you live a life of spiritual usefulness even though you have to handicap yourself to do it than to exist unimpaired but so uselessly that you are fit only for the rubbish heap.’ In fact, Protestants, having arrived at a knowledge of the truth and therefore safe themselves, entered with some gusto into eternal-hell-fire preaching in which the torments of the damned were as vividly described as if the true believers were indulging in that part of their reward pictured by some early Christians of watching from their grandstand in heaven the torments in hell of those who in this life had persecuted *them*.

Heaven was not pictured with the same conviction – eternal peace and rest, the symbolism of casting down golden crowns upon a glassy sea in an everlastingly triumphant church service and the ideal, cube-shaped New Jerusalem descending from heaven, disguised, understandingly, a lack of comprehension of an ideal immortality which is as difficult to imagine as it is today to picture the trillions of light-years that embrace the hundreds of millions of galaxies that lie in the palms of God. The Church before Galileo had a simple three-tier cosmology with which its imagination could cope – a heaven of eternal peace, repose and happiness literally just above the sky; another place, purgatory, which Dante pictured as a mountain somewhere in the southern hemisphere; and hell, situated under the earth’s surface. Christian creeds expressed belief in the life of the world to come but were vague about specifics. Reincarnation, however, had no Biblical support and no place in the teaching of any established church.

The Inner Light. Every thinking believer in any faith is faced with elements in his system with which he is not happy. It is here that the inner light of individual judgement may shine. To be open to modifications of one’s belief is easier than it used to be, because the old monolithic authorities of Scripture and Church have altered in their nature. The Bible is still ‘the Word of God’, but as an unfolding of the gradual and often misunderstood revelation of God to man, not as an infallibly true history and scientific account of the world from the creation onwards. Very few honest educated churchmen today would claim infallibility for their denomination against other communions or for their religion against others. The ecumenical and interfaith spirit strengthens with tolerance and knowledge.

Moreover, a faith that is static becomes fossilized. A strength of Christianity is that the revelation brought by Jesus Christ is complete and final but that its interpretation is continuously developing as humankind 'catches up' with an understanding of it, the way sometimes shown by pioneer thinkers following personal conviction. An example of this is the attitude towards slavery, unquestioned by St. Paul and other Christians until the 18th. century but now universally condemned by them. It is therefore open to a Christian to use his inner light in matters where the Bible and Church are ambiguous. He is free to conjecture that his destiny in the life to come is a progression of existences. These could begin by being further terrestrial experiences, that is, reincarnations as commonly understood, leading to more spiritual stages when he outgrows earth and is increasingly purified and enlightened until he arrives at his ultimate goal, of knowing God even as he himself is known by God. This process can equate reincarnation with purgatory – why not? What the post-terrestrial embodiments and circumstances of the individual human spirits are like are, of course, beyond imagination.

There are arguments against Reincarnation. One is that most of us have no recollection of past lives and therefore cannot learn from them. This may be answered in two ways. First, some RBSs teach that on the way to enlightenment the seeker is granted the knowledge of all his incarnations, which gives him a panoramic view of his spiritual progress. The second is, the experience of a single life. Human adults remember practically nothing of their first five years of existence and only fragments of the next three or four. Yet, physically and mentally, the major part of what they are in adulthood was formed during those unremembered years. If physically fit, it is because they were fed sensibly in thousands of meals and tended continuously in other ways of which they remember nothing. If adequately developed mentally, morally, aesthetically, spiritually, it is because they were influenced by people and experiences of which they are now largely unaware. A modern human could be the product of many unremembered reincarnations which have made him what he is and enabled him, after a tiny time of evolution geologically speaking, to start from a platform of potential development so far above that of our hominid ancestors of a million years ago as to be almost unimaginable. Belief in reincarnation is a faith, subject to the doubts and debate that any faith engenders; but if one interprets the process as one of spiritual development working parallel to physical evolution, it is a faith that is viable in terms of modern cosmology.

The idea of its working through geological time is not new. Hinduism's fundamental cycle is the 'day of Brahma' of 4,320,000,000 years and a 'life' of Brahma lasts for a century of years of 360 days each, or more than 155 million million years. Hindu reincarnationists are therefore able to accept intermissions between lives a thousand or more years long. If one is dealing with the philosophy of reincarnation, one has to consider the greatest panoramas it can envisage. The tableaux of Judaism, Christianity and Islam until the last two or three centuries, are tiny compared with the Hindu vision – which is much more in tune with today's science.

It is a quality of the human mind that it can theoretically formulate concepts of the infinitely little and the infinitely great and accurately calculate their behaviour, past, present and future, by mathematical equations. Our old, comfortable, 'local' heaven, purgatory and hell have been replaced by a microcosm of infra-microscopic quarks and a macrocosm of decillions of light-years in which innumerable stars and systems seethe and bubble in their galaxies. To realise for a second these concepts as facts would vaporize our minds with the horror of their immensities, however clever we are at playing with them theoretically. Yet these are what Christians must believe their God brought into existence and he is the Concept which Christianity teaches us that it is our ultimate destiny to know even as we are known by him. Can even an infinity of existences of

ever-increasing awareness equip a human spirit for such a mutual empathy between Creator and created?

Many Christians follow different scenarios. Evangelicals, for example, subscribe to a theology of Atonement that regards Christ's death on the cross as resulting in a complete wiping out of sin in the believer justified by his faith so that, dressed in the wedding-garment of Christ's righteousness, he can pass unabashed into the immediate presence of God. To believe otherwise is to belittle the love of Christ.

Against this it may be argued that Christ's work does not lose its efficacy because a believer progresses from one stage of life into another. His Atonement is an eternal manifestation of his love and, the more existences of a single enduring being to which it applies (rather than only one), the more reason to worship him. The magnitude of the love to be apprehended is greater than the centillions of the cosmos.

Then there is the scenario of the great and terrible Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgement, when the righteous will receive their reward and the wicked be assigned to hell. Christian teaching is that God is love, is just and is omnipotent. If his omnipotence *eventually* fails to save a single item of his creation (whatever salvation may mean) not only is he a failure in power but also in love; and since he is *ultimately* responsible for everything, however many devils and demi-urges may be interposed between him and portions of his cosmos, also a failure in justice. Logically, a Christian can believe only in universal salvation – again, whatever that may mean. Human logic may be as fallible as everything else in the makeup of humankind – but it is the only logic we have. A Christian RBS postulates one process by which God's creation can reach the target he has set for it. The basic philosophies of reincarnation and Christianity are compatible in that both anticipate the fulfilment of God himself in the ultimate perfection of all the potentialities of every particle of his creation.

For him it has already been reached, since for God, the I AM, all past, present and future IS and our time is part of his eternity.

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Is there any hard evidence of reincarnation?

Nothing can be proved in matters of faith in the way that the truth of mathematical theorems or chemical formulae can be demonstrated. Experience that convinces believers can be dismissed as subjective or anecdotal by sceptics. Psychical research provides a great deal of evidence but, as in most areas of the paranormal, it is inconclusive. Most of it is subject to other explanations and, where it is apparently inexplicable, materialists can always ascribe abnormal experiences to our still very limited knowledge of the working of the human brain/mind complex.

The greatest body of evidence has been collected during a lifetime of research into and publication of cases from cultures eastern and western by Dr Ian Stevenson (see Bibliography). Many of these concern the memories of children who, from the age at which they can first communicate until they are about five to eight years old, remember recent lives in other families in other localities they can describe in detail. As much as 90% of their memories has been found to be correct, supplemented often by other evidence such as that of birthmarks corresponding to the wounds which ended their previous lives. Dr Stevenson's work is scholarly and objective and he allows the facts to speak for themselves. If they are not cases of reincarnation, then, what is their explanation?

Adults, such as Joan Grant and A. J. Stewart (see Bibliography), who became convinced that they are reincarnations of one or more historical characters, find their convictions growing rather than fading as time passes. Believers find their experiences supportive, perhaps more in atmosphere than in fact. Sceptics fasten on historical inaccuracies. Linked with them can be those who affirm group reincarnation, such as Arthur Guirdham (see Bibliography) and Edgar Cayce (1877-1945). Subject of a small library of books – his memorial is the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Virginia Beach, to which enquirers are referred).

Psychical research literature provides a number of cases of vivid *déjà vu* experiences where the subjects have apparently moved back in time in places never visited before in this life and been able to describe in advance to their companions a detailed topography of the locality (See, typically, Martin Ebon, 1977, and *Proceedings of the (English) Society for Psychical Research, 1895*). Most of such experiences are by their nature anecdotal and therefore accepted or not according to the personal belief systems of their readers.

The Christos experience, engendered by a system of massage accompanied by mental exercises, can cause subjects to recall lives of a particular quality. They are aware simultaneously of a past life, say, in ancient Rome and of being in their modern house, able to give an eye-witness account of their Roman life and answering questions from their friends about it. Three books by G. M. Glaskin, an Australian author (see Bibliography), give very graphic accounts of his experiences with the Christos technique. A serious research project in this type of ‘do-it-yourself reincarnation’ might produce interesting results.

Subjects who have recaptured lives under hypnosis, sometimes a series of a dozen or so, have probably most caught the public’s interest. Research into these gives four types of result. The first is that unremembered reading plus the mythopoeic faculty (subliminal dramatization) can provide material for a purely fantasy life. The second is that a substantial part of a life can be found to be true and to be supported by obscure historical evidence which the subject could not normally have known. Third, in a life mostly accurately recalled, there may be other facts that are true but attached to the wrong people – thus, a woman may name children as hers who are recorded in contemporary records as being those of another. Fourth, a life mainly accurately remembered may suddenly turn into complete fantasy, as if the subject had suddenly got bored with recounting a pedestrian existence and let imagination rip with the development of a mistress or lover. Unbelievers may fasten on the inaccuracies and believers on the remarkable truths, explaining the fiction as false memories of some kind – after all, our memories in this life are often fallacious. Both parties are faced with facts inimical to their viewpoints.

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Recently, a well-known British psychical researcher ‘came through’ shortly after his death to a friend who asked him what it was like on the other side. He replied, ‘What surprised me was that everything was so normal’ (confidential personal communication) – which makes me hope that our next immediate existence may not be alarmingly unfamiliar!

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